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EVIDENCE EVALUED

Parting, the final rupture of separation,
Is a time for summation of themes,
But episodes recapitulated by the one
Are to the other fantasy or hallucination,
A travesty of the past in wishful dreams
Excusing present emotion.
Leads even to wondering what has been undergone
As when in a neutral country
Someone may say 'Bombing was like this
And you must have felt so, or so' and I reply
'Yes, I suppose it was like that,'
Speaking as of something encountered long ago
In a tunnel or mine. But what remains
Is not a sequence of aero-engine strokes
Or the silhouettes of planes,
But a sense of relief and shitten pants.
To recreate the waxed petals
Of a begonia, the thoraxes of red ants,
The silky fur of an Angora rabbit,
To compare the tactile values of diverse metals,
Or to reconcile the evidence, half lies
Half delusion, of Sikh witnesses,
Are not dissimilar tasks, calling for objectivity
Analytical power and imaginative understanding.
But then one is the judge
Standing outside the eddies of association.
In personal memories
A moment of silence may mean negation
And withdrawal, but to the partner in the moment
It may mean communion and union,
Inasmuch as silence, requiring great concentration
Of love and unselfishness, may be offered
At a time when only words
Or a caress or kiss are intelligible.
So one takes ship from latitude to latitude
Amassing scraps of local information,
Jade brooches, ebony elephants, orchids, krises,
But through ignorance of languages
Hearing only pidgin platitudes,
Not knowing the thoughts and agonies
Of fellow passengers, or guessing
The shapes and contours of the hinterland.
Existence at this level of communication
Can only be dissected and exposed
After removal from it and after contact
With other planes of living
By inner experience and overt act,

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As we cannot know that we
Are on an island until we glimpse the sea
And the opposite lighthouses and cliffs.
But when this promontory is reached
This other continent established, speech
Precision of thought and vision
Flow as the spring solstice flowers.

'When I have seen
Reflected in another's grace
My face clean
Ransacked and restored,
And in a voice heard the accord
Of sympathy and the harmonic
Echoing my note, all that was sick
Double and faint has sprung hale (hail!)
To erect and consecrate
The single strict and fecund state
In a polyphonous madrigal.
The smell of breasts and hair
Is spikenard and myrrh
Musk, sandalwood and saffron,
And the touch of buttocks
A rounding and satisfying boon.
The taste of mouth gives back to mouth
An answering sacramental oath.
In this freedom what is true and dreams
Are one, as clocks
At twelve blend day and night
And tomorrow and yesterday, darkness and light
In a seamless whole unite.'

So saying I assume a more than temporal order
Some over-riding sanction freely
Imposed by spirit on spirit, mutually
Gifting eye, ear and voice with power
To colour, tune and appraise the hour
Of rapture as a component in a larger figure
Where the pattern enriches what was poor
And uncovers what was hidden.
When we are of the other order we reason
With its counters and within its premises,
So that evidence alters with the appearance
Of nimbus, the increase of humidity
Or the advance of the thermometer,
And love changes as we incline in our vocabulary
To Eros or to Agape.
But once the eye has been clarified
The ear lightened and the tongue cleansed,
The powers of the digit are heightened
From single to the square;

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The new idiom and rhythm are there
Not subject to calamity or tied by time
But expressing in terms of the known
The language of the peripheries of speculation,
The harmony of the inner and outermost spheres.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

CHAUCER

(1) TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

THE bibliography which Chaucer might be said—from a modern viewpoint—to have omitted to append to his work, the references to sources which he might have subjoined as notes to his poems had he been modern enough to follow a recent procedure, would be most extensive—and as distracting in effect perhaps as the notes to the *Waste Land* have proved. The detective work which this omission has provoked reveals that almost every other line in Chaucer has been deliberately lifted from somewhere or other and that it frequently happens that lines from quite diverse sources adjoin each other. Yet this diversity of origin is invariably quite unfelt in the result which is neither Machaut nor Deschamps, Dante nor Boccaccio, but something distinctly Chaucer. It is this Chaucerian character which is the object for the critic's attention and from the elucidation of which the critic ought not to allow himself to be distracted. If Chaucer is not only quite distinct from but greater than any of his 'sources'—except, of course, Dante—that greatness evidently resides in this Chaucerian character which may so easily be lost sight of in the excitement of the hunt for 'sources.'

I would not be thought to wish to belittle the work that has been done to show Chaucer's direct indebtedness, for example, to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun and the *fabliaux*, to Machaut and Deschamps—his French contemporaries—to Ovid and Virgil and other Latin poets either directly or as already mediaevalized in the *Roman d'Eneas* and the *Ovide moralisé*, to the *Roman de Troie* of Benoit de Sainte-Maure, to Cicero and Boethius, to numerous mediaeval Latin books—including books on astrology, alchemy, physics, medicine which Chaucer was evidently thoroughly acquainted with—to the *Nova Poetria* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf the rhetorician, to Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. It establishes the really important fact that (since European poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had its *locus* in Tuscany and Provence, Italy and France) Chaucer's appearance as a great European in English (for Chaucer is of England and very individually so) was conditioned by an enormous labour of assimilation and adaptation impossible to any poet who did not possess in himself quite extraordinary genius. I have no doubt that something of critical value might be gained from a line-by-line comparison between Chaucer

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and his 'sources,' but the risks are considerable and the ultimate fruit perhaps not worth the immense labour spent. Such an investigation points beyond the bounds not only of what is readily practicable but of what is relevant to criticism, which is necessarily concerned primarily with what is, however it arrived at being so; and that, in this case, is not any of the 'sources' listed, nor even a combination of them, but Chaucer, whom it seems sensible therefore to approach directly. My approach will therefore be that of the general reader of poetry for whom one or two remarks of Mr. Eliot's about Dante have seemed more freshly to illumine Chaucer—that is, to be more relevant to criticism of Chaucer—than anything that has been written more ostensibly about Chaucer.

What may at first disconcert the general reader coming from the English poetry of the great period—the seventeenth century—is that in Chaucer there are not the ambiguities of phrase there are in Shakespeare, Donne and Marvell. Chaucer's phrases are disconcertingly direct to a reader accustomed to the complexities, the incrustations of meaning involved in Shakespearean metaphor. Similes, not metaphors, are what are important in Chaucer, but these are seldom ambiguous and are often simply aids to the visualization which is important for allegory and, for that very reason, important even in such of Chaucer as is not classifiable as allegory. The reader might easily be deceived into supposing that no profundities comparable to those of Shakespeare are concealed within this crystal clearness and directness of phrase. But if here there are few phrases that are metaphorical in the Shakespearean way, that may be because the poem as a whole is—to borrow from Mr. Eliot on Dante—itself a kind of metaphor; again I think not only of those poems which are classifiable as allegories, but of those much more Chaucerian poems which it is not so simple to classify.

The account of Chaucer according to which he progressed from allegory to realism tends to be misleading. His most realistic poems—which are also his best poems—have not entirely, or even essentially, escaped from allegory, but are rather extensions of allegory on to the realistic plane of his observation. Realism is not at all incompatible with allegory as we are apt to imagine. Mediaeval allegory and personification supplied Chaucer's observation with a guiding method and his judgment with an initial scale of moral values which his observation gradually clarified and which clarified his observation. Underlying the realism remain the allegorical and moral patterns. The poems gain in profundity and variety from the mutual enrichment of these multiple layers of meaning, though the Chaucerian phrase in itself is to the end remarkable for its crystalline and limpid simplicity.

Chaucer again may seem pale and insipid—prosaic almost—by comparison with the hyperbolical splendours of Elizabethan rhetoric. There is no exaggeration in Chaucerian art. For there is art—very deliberate and laboriously acquired art rigidly economized and disciplined—behind this wonderful simplicity and naturalness. The simplicity and naturalness are those which belong to the profoundly civilized and must not be mistaken for the unsophisticated naivety

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the Romantics sought after. Beside that simplicity the Elizabethan pompous magnificence often looks barbaric. Professor Manly in his valuable pamphlet, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, indicates how thoroughly grounded Chaucer was in the mediaeval 'rhetoric' which he was sufficiently skilled in, and conscious of, to parody in the *Nonne Preestes Tale*. But this 'rhetoric'—often at its most noticeable a series of *exempla*—leaves the simplicity and directness of Chaucerian phrase intact. There is no resemblance between it and the Elizabethan poetic 'rhetoric.' Here we are using 'rhetoric' in two quite different senses.

The elements of Chaucer's mature art are present from the beginning, and are perhaps more recognizable there, in the early allegories, than in the great poems. The conventional figures and types first exhibited in the allegories become more and more particularized, and thus individualized, as Chaucer's poetry matures and the realism of his personal observation and unrivalled experience of his world is grafted on to them. The figures of Ydelnesse and of Mirthe in the first part—the Chaucerian part—of the English version of the *Romaunt of the Rose* have implicit in them several of the later 'characters.'[1] Here, for example, are some basic traits of the appearance of the Prioresse (though she is, as a whole, perhaps nearer Curteisye than Ydelnesse):

> Hir nose of good proporcioun,
> Hir yen greye as a faucoun. . .
> With litel mouth, and round to see:
> A clove chin eek hadde she.

But Ydelnesse is so much a generalization that she is basically many other diverse Chaucerian ladies. Mirthe equally is the generalized basis not only of the young Squier but of the various other Chaucerian young bachelors—and indeed of some of the young women as well.

> As round as appel was his face,
> Ful rody and whyt in every place,
> Fetys he was and wel beseye,
> With metely mouth and yen greye;
> His nose by mesure wrought ful right;
> Crisp was his heer, and eek ful bright.

Visualization, which is obviously of primary importance in these personifications, was to remain important in the later 'characters'; the similes—

> As round as appel was his face. . . .

> Hir heer was as yelowe of hewe
> As any basin scoured newe

---

[1]Compare *The Compleynte unto Pite*:

> And fresshe Beautee, Lust and Jolitee,
> Assured Manner, Youthe and Honestee.

The 'assured Manner' belongs also to Criseyde and to several of the young women of the *Tales*.

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—are directly aimed at producing this visualization. Even more distinctly the elements of the satiric portraits of ecclesiastics that enliven the *Canterbury Tales* are already present in the second part of the *Romaunt of the Rose*. The Monk, the Friar and the others are potential in Fals-Semblant.

> Amour. 'Thou prechest abstinence also?'
> F. Sem. 'Sir, I wol fillen, so mote I go,
> My paunche of gode mete and wyne,
> As shulde a maister of divyne;
> For how that I me pover feyne,
> Yit alle pore folk I disdeyne.
> 'I love bet the acqueyntaunce
> Ten tymes, of the king of Fraunce,
> Than of pore man of mylde mode,
> Though that his soule be also gode . . .
> Let bere hem to the spitel anoon,
> But, for me, comfort gete they noon,
> But a riche sike usurere
> Wolde I visyte and drawe nere;
> Him wol I comforte and rehete,
> For I hope of his gold to gete . . .
> I rekke not of pore men,
> Hir astate is not worth an hen.
> Where findest thou a swinker of labour
> Have me unto his confessour?

The more vigorous realism in this part of the poem:

> But Beggers with these hodes wyde,
> With sleighe and pale faces lene,
> And greye clothes not ful clene,
> But fretted ful of tatarwagges,
> And highe shoes, knopped with dagges,
> That frouncen lyke a quaile-pype,
> Or botes riveling as a gype

—belongs both to allegory and to the observed world. The realistic phantasmagoria is grouped and ordered according to a pattern of personified virtues and vices. The Sins of Coveityse and Glotonye—as when Fals-Semblant speaks of 'fyn vitaille,'

> That we, under our clothes wyde
> Maken thurgh our golet glyde,

(the phrase recurs in the sermon on 'glotonye' in the *Pardoner's Tale*) stand out from the rest as they continue to do throughout Chaucer. The disenchanting intelligence present in this part of the poem is to become (one feels) incorporated in Chaucer's superior intelligence. The presence of this maturer intelligence forces a revision of the values of the first part of the poem, submitting love ('It is a sykenesse of the thought') and the courtly convention to the criticism of Raisoun.

> For to gete and have the Rose
> Which maketh thee so mate and wood
> That thou desirest noon other good.

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No 'good' other than 'to gete and have the Rose' has been proposed in the first part. There is thus in the second part a shift of values resulting both from a sceptical attitude to love and from a realization that there are other values. The fact that a section (Fragment B) of this part of the translation is certainly not Chaucer's does not, I think, affect this argument.

If we look through such poems as *The Boke of the Duchesse*, *The Parlement of Foules* and *The Legend of Good Women*, we observe a deepening humanization of the allegorical designs, but the original allegorizing, personifying impulse equally continues. The man in black in *The Boke of the Duchesse* slips back or is extended—according to the point of view—from being a person into being at the same time a personification:

> For I am sorwe and sorwe is I.

Though *The Boke of the Duchesse* is almost entirely translation, it is impossible to mistake in it already the characteristic Chaucerian tenderness:

> . . . for be it never so derke
> Me thinketh I see hir ever mo.

In *The Legend of Good Women* the Chaucerian knowledge of the human heart is already profoundly there. It shows itself in the descriptions of Lucretia and of Tarquin unable to get her image out of his mind:

> Th' image of her recording alwey newe;
> 'Thus lay her heer, and thus fresh was her hewe;
> Thus sat, thus spak, thus span; this was her chere,
> Thus fair she was, and this was her manere.'
> Al this conceit his herte hath now y-take.
> And, as the see, with tempest al to-shake,
> That, after whan the storm is al ago,
> Yet wol the water quappe a day or two,
> Right so, thogh that her forme wer absent,
> The plesaunce of her forme was present[2]—

and in the human feeling, delicately rendered because delicately understood, when Medea says:

> Why lyked me thy yelowe heir to see
> More than the boundes of myn hoestee,

and in the peculiar naivety of Pyramus and Thisbe:

> Thus wolde they seyn—'allas! thou wikked wal'—

which contrasts with, and yet belongs to the same world of primary feeling as, the brutality of their end:

> And at the last her love than hath she founde
> Beting with his heles on the grounde,
> Al blody, and therwith-al a-bak she sterte,
> And lyke the wawes quappe gan her herte—

while the celebrated description of Ariadne deserted (2185–98)

[2]There is a rough draft of this theme, which we find recurring, in *Anelida and Arcite* (133 *et seq.*).

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which has so appealed to the romantic taste of a later age gains—by comparison with the equally brilliant 'tapestry piece' of Dido and Aeneas passing to hunting (1188–1211)—a third dimension from its conveyance of the feeling of loss at the heart of the distraction, and the consequent tact, as well as sympathetic accuracy, with which distracted human behaviour is rendered. These passages could all be paralleled in the *Canterbury Tales*; even the same phrases keep recurring.

Chaucer, as initially a *trouvère*, is evidently thoroughly exercised and accomplished in metrical skill. But the suppleness of life—the speaking voice—is there early (at least to judge by the poems that survive in the canon) especially in dialogue. The bird 'flytings' of *the Parlement of Foules* illustrate that allegory is not incompatible with dramatic dialogue.

> 'Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos!'
> Quod the sperhauk; 'never mot she thee!
> Lo, swich hit is to have a tonge loos' . . .
>
> 'Now fy, cherl!' quod the gentil tercelet,
> 'Out of the dunghil com that word ful right,
> Thou canst noght see which thing is well be-set:
> Thou farest by love as oules doon by light . . .
>
> 'Ye! have the glotoun fild ynogh his paunche,
> Then are we wel!' seyde the merlioun;
> 'Thou mordrer of the heysugge on the braunche . . .

The lesser poems (and some of the greater too) are on the whole felt to be too diffuse, but the tone is often pleasantly intimate and humorous. They are composed evidently for a leisurely, as well as leisured, gossiping society. *The Hous of Fame* is probably the most garrulous. How far the garrulity here is that of conscious self-dramatization—the eagle of the poem is correspondingly garrulous—is hard to say. This informal poem must not be read solemnly. To have in higher admiration Morris and the pre-Raphaelites when reading it (as some of the commentators seem to have had) might be fatal to it—unless it were fatal to the pre-Raphaelites. Even the way the comparison with Dante is made is apt to be misleading as well as damaging. There is, of course, a correspondance in the design and even—as in Chaucer's poetry in general—in the actual handling of the words, at least when compared with Shakespeare's. The similes are clarifying—often visually.

> But as a blinde man stert a hare . . .
> . . . and ful eek of windowes
> As flakes falle in grete snowes . . .
> The halle was al ful y-wis
> Of hem that writen olde gestes
> As ben on treës rokkes nestes . . .
> As men a pot-ful bawme helde
> Among a basket ful of roses.

But Chaucer is putting this design and method which he shares with Dante—and may here have partly adapted from Dane—to a

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different use. In spite of what has been said about it being a failure to scale the Dantean heights—Dante being in any case wrongly, of course, associated with the Miltonic sublime—the poem is quite unpretentious in tone and belongs to the realm of the fantastic serio-comic. Allegory need not be solemn; it is here, at its more relaxed, burlesque in a personal way (as when Chaucer borne upwards in the eagle's talons wonders

Wher Joves wol me stellifye

or in such an aside as

As fyn as ducat in Venyse
Of whiche to lyte al in my pouche is?)

But at its more serious and responsible—and important—it is more gravely ironic.

But what art thou that seyst this tale,
That werest on thy hose a pale,
And on thy tipet swiche a belle!'
'Madame,' quod he, 'sooth to telle,
I am that ilke shrewe, y-wis,
That brende the temple of Isidis
In Athenes, lo, that citee.'
'And wherfor didest thou so?' quod she.
'By my thrift,' quod he, 'madame,
I wolde fayn han had a fame,
As other folk hadde in the toun,
Al-thogh they were of greet renoun
For hir vertu and for hir thewes;
Thoughte I, as greet a fame han shrewes,
Thogh hit be but for shrewednesse,
As gode folk han for goodnesse;
And sith I may not have that oon,
That other nil I noght for-goon.
And for to gette of Fames hyre,
The temple sette I al a-fyre.

There allegory and ironic contemplation of human folly are one.

'What?' quod I. 'The grete soun,'
Quod he, 'that rumbleth up and doun
In Fames Hous, ful of tydinges,
Bothe of fair speche and chydinges,
And of fals and soth compouned . . .
Nay, dred thee not therof,' quod he,
'Hit is nothing wil byten thee:
Thou shalt non harm have, trewely.'

Fame—one of the primary objects of human folly—is as air and vanity. The fantastic again, as in the following description of a true and a false rumour meeting, is an element of the irony:

And somtyme saugh I tho, at ones,
A lesing and a sad soth-sawe,
That gonne of aventure drawe
Out at a windowe for to pace;

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And, when they metten in that place,
They were a-chekked bothe two,
And neither of hem moste out go;
For other so they gonne croude,
Til eche of hem gan cryen loude,
'Lat me go first!' 'Nay, but lat me!
And here I wol ensuren thee
With the nones that thou wolt do so,
That I shal never fro thee go,
But be thyn owne sworen brother!
We will medle us ech with other,
That no man, be he never so wrothe,
Shal han that oon of two, but bothe
At ones, al beside his leve,
Come we a-morwe or on eve,
Be we cryed or stille y-rouned.'
Thus saugh I fals and sooth compouned
Togeder flee for oo tydinge.

The expository, explicatory passage in which the eagle like a 'clerk' (or a modern professor of physical science) informs Chaucer how sounds travel to Fame's House, besides being excellent parody—intellectual pomposity and pedantic portentousness conveyed in the rhythm—enforces the recognition of vanity, the sense of emptiness, which is the basis of the irony. The high wisdom of the mediaeval poet, hostile to all forms of illusion and delusion ('fantasye')—

'O Crist,' thoughte I, 'that art in blisse,
Fro fantom and illusioun
Me save!' and with devocioun
Myn yën to the heven I caste,

is related to his clarifying power. Chaucer's growing rationalizing faculty and his inherited religious feeling—at its highest—are not antagonistic.

There is nothing in later English poetry so diffuse that is at the same time of such ultimate complexity—and fineness of quality—as *Troilus and Criseyde* except the magnificently, insolently slapdash *Don Juan*. But, whereas Chaucer's poem means that Chaucer belonged to his great spiritual civilisation, Byron's is the work of an independent aristocratic spirit disdainful of a civilization recognized as inferior. Chaucer's poem contrasts in its diffuseness with the verse tales of Crabbe the best of which are successes of concentration allied to wit. The comparison of *Troilus and Criseyde* with the eighteenth-century novel is not altogether fortuitous, though the sophistication of its verse corresponds to a sophistication of mind superior to that of an eighteenth-century novelist. Both were composed for an audience prepared—and at liberty—to linger with the tale; in contrast to the Elizabeth play in which the 'strong necessity of time' compelled events of great magnitude and moment into 'the two hours' traffic of the stage' and in which, therefore, every spoken phrase had to count enormously. Though the verse of *Troilus and Criseyde* is serenely accomplished and at ease, it is

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scarcely more concentrated than the prose of a novel, and the poem's complexity cannot begin to be felt in a phrase and seldom in any single short passage. Any analysis—any attempt to sound the poem's death and disentangle its rich variety of meaning—necessarily involves simplification which cannot, in this case, immediately be corrected by the quotations.

The most tempting, and the most risky, of these simplifications is to consider the poem as built upon contrasts between three 'characters'—Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus. Yet this method has, in this particular case, such obvious advantages that in spite of the risk—that of reducing the variety of the poem to three 'psychological studies'—it is substantially the method I shall, with certain modifications and safeguards, adopt. I shall endeavour to keep in mind that the Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus 'characters' are elements in the poem, each being associated or identified with a distinct group of values, and I shall proceed by examination of particular passages hoping that thus the complexity of the poem will less elude us. No one short passage will yield such a harvest as a passage of Shakespeare or a poem of Marvell or Donne—or, for that matter, of Pope, Blake, Hopkins, Yeats or Eliot. But by examining at various places the poetry, which is all that exists in some sense objectively, I shall hope to reach out to the general design without losing contact with the varying stream of the actual poetry.

The Pandarus element is the most important if we consider that it is its presence which most affects the poem's meaning. The first entrance of Pandarus (Book One, stanzas 79 *et seq.*) shows him a goliard—in the clash between the sacred and profane a protagonist of 'jolytee' and 'lustiness' and disrespectful of 'holinesse.'

> God save hem that bi-seged han our toun,
> And so can leye our jolytee on presse,
> And bring our lusty folk to holinesse!

Though he ostensibly mistakes the cause of Troilus' trouble, it is explained that he understands his friend's nature very well and is proceeding diplomatically. Yet for all his superior worldly wisdom he is a comic figure and remains in some respects an inferior and himself despised of women—

> Thou coudest never in love thy-selven wisse;
> How devel maystow bringen me to blisse?

—his practical wisdom being (as Troilus thinks) a matter of 'proverbes' and 'olde ensamples,' such as might have been acquired from the books studied in the schools, rather than of successful personal experience.

> Nor other cure canstow noon for me.
> Eek I nil not be cured, I wol deye;
> What knowe I of the quene Niobe?
> Lat be thyne olde ensaumples, I thee preye.

But Troilus is at the same time revealing his own drooping proclivity ('Eek I nil not be cured, I wol deye') as well as suspected limitations of Pandarus.

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In Book Two (stanzas 12 *et seq.* and stanzas 157 *et seq.*) Pandarus and Criseyde, uncle and niece, unfold in association with each other. When Pandarus calls, Criseyde and two other ladies—the serious background of their own lives being the siege of Troy—are listening to the story of the Siege of Thebes being read to them by a maid, and at once there is all the appearance of a clash in the mockery that breaks out when, noticing the book, he asks:

> 'For goddes love, what seith it? tel it us.
> Is it of love? O, some good ye me lere!'
> 'Uncle,' quod she, 'your maistresse is not here!'
> With that they gonnen laughe.

It is plain they regard him as a buffoon. In the love-war opposition Criseyde and her ladies thus appear to take their stand resolutely on the side of the serious public business of war. But this clash between uncle and niece is more apparent than real. There is more identity of instinct and temperament than at first appears. The flippant, disrespectful tone of Criseyde's—

> How the bisshop, as the book can telle,
> Amphiorax, fil thurgh the ground to helle

is goliardic; Pandarus persists—enforcing the books-life opposition—

> Quod Pandarus, 'al this knowe I myselve,
> And al th'assege of Thebes and the care;
> For her-of been ther maked bokes twelve;—
> But lat be this, and tel me how ye fare';

and finally he introduces, with some chance of ultimate success, the theme not only of 'Throw away your books,' but, more recklessly, of 'Throw away your widow's weeds':

> Do wey your book, rys up, and lat us daunce,
> And lat us don to May som observaunce.

Pandarus is, in advice to another, the protagonist of the worldly life and the joy of the natural heart as opposed to book-learning, the widow's seclusion and religion. The offer of this life appeals to Criseyde's womanish instinct as the false note in her over-emphatic reply betrays. The exaggerated holiness and pretence of outraged decorum turn into perhaps not wholly unconscious burlesque.

> It sete me wel bet ay in a cave
> To bidde, and rede on holy seyntes lyves:
> Lat maydens gon to daunce, and yonge wyves.

Yet she persists in simulated misunderstanding. Pandarus hints that he knows something that would be good news to her if she knew. To those in the besieged city good news could only mean, one might suppose, one thing; and so, returning to the theme of besieged cities, Criseyde responds:

> For goddes love; is than th'assege aweye?
> I am of Grekes so ferd that I deye.

There are the additional ironies that Criseyde's virtue is being besieged though she does not yet fully realize it, and perhaps (for I suppose the reader was presumed already to know the original

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story) that it was a Greek, Diomede, who finally won—or betrayed —her. Pandarus ingeniously arouses his niece's curiosity without satisfying it (stanzas 18–21), introduces Troilus' name and praises (stanzas 22 *et seq.*), reiterates the theme of—

> But yet I seye, aryseth, lat us daunce,
> And cast your widwes habit to mischaunce:
> What list yow thus your-self to disfigure?—

and enforces his offer of a fuller life with the eternal plea of the brevity of life, reminding her how beauty succumbs to age (stanza 57). The surprising life-likeness of the leave-taking when Pandarus is about to tell her finally the name of her lover—

> With that she gan hir eyen doun to caste,
> And Pandarus to coghe gan a lyte—

seems to arise from the mutual recognition that neither has been so innocent as, when playing their parts, they have seemed. Pandarus moves—returns, rather—into the sphere of a closer intimacy. When he gazes on her she asks

> Sey ye me never er now?

Criseyde's mask—that of the pious widow—further disintegrates under the shock of Pandarus' revelation that the young prince is her lover. Criseyde is a figure viewed periodically under a comic (even satiric) light partly reflected from the fully comic Pandarus and searchlighting her frailties and refuges of self-deceit.

(Stanza 66) And if this man slee here him-self, allas!
In my presence, it wol be no solas.
What men wolde of hit deme—

(Stanza 72) 'Can he wel speke of love?' quod she, 'I preye,
Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye.'

(Stanza 78) For man may love, of possibilitee,
A womman, so, his hearte may to-breste,
And she nought love ayein, but if hir leste.

Much of Criseyde is of course the conventional mediaeval satire against women; but the life-likeness proceeds from Chaucer's profounder knowledge.

When Pandarus again visits his niece (Book Two, stanzas 157 *et seq.*) as the bearer of a letter from Troilus he first obtrudes his own 'hopeless passion'—

> I may not slepe never a Mayes morwe;
> I have a jolly wo, a lusty sorwe—

but his woe is 'joly,' his sorrow 'lusty,' and burlesques Troilus'; his joyous animality ensures his persistence as a comic figure, burlesquing the tragic Troilus.

> 'Now by your feyth, myn uncle, 'quod she, 'dere,
> What maner windes gydeth yow now here?
> Tel us your joly wo and your penaunce,
> How ferforth be ye in loves daunce.'
> 'By god,' quod he, 'I hoppe alwey bihinde!'
> And she to-laugh, it thoughte hir herte breste,

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Quod Pandarus, 'loke alwey that ye finde
Game in myn hood. . . .'

The fantastic image of the ship guided by the wind sets the tone. Love here is spoken of in the ancient figure of a dance, with Pandarus in the role of the parodying clown, the satyr burlesquing the dance of love, yet consciously an inferior—

I hoppe alwey behinde.

Criseyde's common humanity ('Go we dyne') brings her down sufficiently to Pandarus' level to talk with him easily in the intimacy of the uncle and niece relation—

With that they wenten arm in arm y-fere
In-to the gardin from the chaumbre doun.

(With Troilus also Pandarus is a familiar, but in their case a contrast of opposites emerges). After the long talk in the privacy of the garden—

Therwith she lough, and seyde, 'go we dyne.'
And he gan at him-self to jape faste,
And seyde, 'nece, I have so greet a pyne
For love that every other day I faste'—
And gan his beste japes forth to caste;
And made hir so to laughe at his folye,
That she for laughter wende for to dye.

—Pandarus again plays the buffoon, provoking his niece's laughter at his own expense ('gan at him-self to jape faste') with the profane tongue-in-the-cheek gesture ('every other day I faste') so that it is lowering for Criseyde to laugh so immoderately at him as she is accustomed to do. (Helen is similarly lowered in Pandarus' talk—
—'For she may leden Paris as hir leste'). There is still more 'game' between uncle and niece (Stanza 169)—

Er he was war, she took him by the hood,
And seyde, 'ye were caught er that ye wiste.'

But behind these frivolous disguises and gambollings the contrivances of the love intrigue set in motion by Pandarus ('But god and Pandare wiste al what this mente') work.

Pandarus' visit to Criseyde the morning after the lovers, through his agency, have been brought to bed (Book Three, stanzas 223–225) has a broad, ribald quality in painful disenchanting contrast to the confused mystic-physical rapture of the lovers' union. Pandarus' coarse obscene aspect is obtruded—

Seyde, 'al this night so reyned it, allas!
That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,
Han litel layser had to slepe and mete;
Al night,' quod he, 'hath reyn so do me wake,
That som of us, I trowe, hir hedes ake.'

And ner he com, and seyde, 'how stont it now
This mery morwe, nece, how can ye fare?'
Criseyde answerde, 'never the bet for yow,
Fox that ye been, god yeve your herte care!

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God helpe me so, ye caused al this fare,
Trow I,' quod she, 'for alle your wordes whyte;
O! who-so seeth yow knoweth yow ful lyte!'

With that she gan hir face for to wrye
With the shete, and wex for shame al reed;
And Pandarus gan under for to prye,
And seyde, 'nece, if that I shal ben deed,
Have here a swerd, and smyteth of myn heed.'
With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste
Under hir nekke, and at the laste hir kiste.

The fox image belongs to the unsophisticated, rustic-comic beast-fable *milieu*, and, as an image of the betrayer, merges into the progressive disillusion—related to a succession of betrayals—that is the process of the poem.[3] The deterioration of Pandarus as a character here—his grossness brought to notice, and the suggestion of his need for vicarious compensation for his own failure in living—is not what is being primarily observed but, like the deterioration of Falstaff as a character in *Henry the Fourth, Part Two*, is rather an aspect of the poem's development. Two elements have been forced into conflict at this point—chivalric quasi-religious love idealism and an element of the real that that idealism has ignored or at least failed perfectly to assimilate. That element is felt as brutal fact in the painful disillusionment that follows its obtrusion.

But though in certain respects Pandarus seems to represent human nature's inferior possibilities, he represents in other respects important human values as well. It is not only that his principal motive—if we are to accept what is again and again repeated—is pity for Troilus, so that when at last he is confronted with the collapse of the fabric of the lovers' paradise he has so laboriously and cunningly contrived for Troilus and Criseyde he becomes himself pitiable without ceasing to be rather despicable.

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[3]The betrayal theme crops up frequently. Criseyde's father, Calkas, is a traitor ('him that falsely hadde his feith so broken' . . . 'hir fadres shame, his falseness and tresoun'). She is exchanged for Antenor who is thus introduced into the town he is to betray. She recognizes Pandarus as in his advice a traitor to her ('For of this world the feith is al agoon' . . . 'This false world, allas! who may it lere'). Pandarus recognizes himself as a traitor to his niece (Book Three, stanzas 39–40). When he tells Criseyde, falsely, that Troilus supposes her false there is (for the reader who knows the story) irony in her exclamations (Book Three stanzas 140–160)—

Horaste! allas! and falsen Troilus—

and again (stanza 151) in

Now god, thou wost, in thought ne dede untrewe
To Troilus was never yet Criseyde.

The great betrayal of the poem is of course Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus. But Criseyde herself is betrayed first by Pandarus and lastly by Diomede. And there are numerous self-betrayals.

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In-to the derke chaumbre, as stille as stoon,
Toward the bed gan softely to goon
So confus, that he niste what to seye;
For verray wo his wit was neigh aweye.

It is that in contrast to Troilus' his is the rational mind and Troilus' capacity—that of a devotee of the courtly love convention—for self-delusion as well as for self-pity is shown up. Troilus' trick of 'fantasye' which already begins to break wantonly loose in Book Four at the prospect of parting—

. . . but doun with Proserpyne,
Whan I am deed, I wol go wone in pyne;
And ther I wol eternally compleyne
My wo, and how that twinned be we tweyne—

infects Criseyde also (stanzas 112–113), and swept away in his harmony of grief she enters equally into his ritualization and donning in fancy the trappings of woe

. . . my clothes everichoon
Shul blake been . . .

dramatizes herself with him as types and symbols of eternally complaining lovers—

For though in erthe y-twinned be we tweyne,
Yet in the feld of pitee, out of peyne,
That hight Elysos . . .
As Orpheus and Erudice . . .

This is (continuing to put it in terms of 'character') certainly going beyond her own nature, and is therefore merely fanciful and in addition an indulgence under an external influence. But Pandarus' rationalism stands its ground and confronts Troilus' fantastic and insidious grief, and in two neighbouring passages in Book Five (stanzas 43–46, and 52–58) these opposing attitudes are forced into bold contrast. Troilus' grief in some of its exaggerations has already not been free from hints of unconscious self-caricature—

And graspe aboute I may, but in this place
Save a pilowe, I finde noght t'embrace.

Whether it is that Troilus' complainings have been excessive, or because of the presence of Pandarus in the background, or because there enters in the consideration that the prospect before Troilus was as yet only a ten days' separation if Criseyde were to prove true, as he evidently had no right to suppose she would not, the gravity of that image is not so secure as, in its context, Ariadne's—

She groped in the bed and found right noght.

The addition of that 'save a pilowe' tilts the balance.

Troilus' grief produces actual dreams and nightmares ('dredfulleste thinges') and, in the first of the two contrasting passages Troilus gives Pandarus instructions as to his funeral—

But of the fyr and flaumbe funeral
In whiche my body brenne shal to glede,
And of the feste and pleyes palestral

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At my vigile, I pray thee take good hede
That al be wel; and offre Mars my stede,
My swerd, myn helm, and, leve brother dere,
My sheld to Pallas, that shyneth clere.

The poudre in which myn herte y-brend shal torne,
That preye I thee thou take and it conserve
In a vessel, that men clepeth an urne,
Of gold, and to my lady that I serve,
For love of whom thus pitously I sterve,
So yeve it hir, and do me this plesaunce,
To preye hir kepe it for a remembraunce.

For wel I fele, by my maladye,
And by my dremes now and yore ago,
Al certeinly, that I mot nedes dye.
The owle eek, which that hight Ascaphilo,
Hath after me shright alle thise nightes two.
And, good Mercurie! of me now, woful wreche,
The soule gyde, and, whan thee list, it fecche!'

Poetry has here her tragic buskin on. The 'rhetoric,' however, is not stylistic—not a matter of poetic diction or figurative exaggeration. It is the contemplated mood which in itself is one of such fantastic self-dramatization—the warrior slain by love—as to tremble in melancholy panoplied magnificence on the edge of the comic. The effect of these melancholy heroics is melodramatic—tragical rather than tragic—the pageantry and posturings of tragedy without a *motif* sufficiently justified, as yet, by anything that has happened.[4] The melting self-pitying mood which has engendered these flamboyant extravagances has been encouraged, if not induced, by conformity to the convention of the complaining lover. Pandarus' reply—that of a rationalist—is impressively wise by comparison (stanzas 47 *et seq.*)—

That it is folye for to sorwen thus,
And causeless . . .
I can not seen in him no remedye,
But lete him worthen with his fantasye.

He asks (stanza 48)—

If that thou trowe, er this, that any wight
Hath loved paramours as wel as thou?

That would be the mature attitude, if it could have been Troilus'—for of course it is all very easy for Pandarus to talk—the realization that he himself is not the only sufferer; that there have been others.

Then follows—significantly on the lips of Pandarus—the essenti-

[4]Contrast *Legend of Philomela*—

But at the feste redy been, y-wis,
The furies three, with alle hir mortel brond.
The owle al night aboute the balkes wond.

The tragic solemnity here is not modified by the context.

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ally Chaucerian, and what we, perhaps, without having any solid right to do so, think of as in the best sense modern, passage on dreams. It is a triumph of the rationalizing intelligence—a clarifying of ignorance and dispersing of superstitious fears—and identical with a clear and rational self-knowledge.

> Thy swevenes eek and al swich fantasye
> Dryf out, and lat hem faren to mischaunce;
> For they procede of thy malencolye,
> That doth thee fele in sleep al this penaunce.
> A straw for alle swevenes significaunce!
> God helpe me so, I counte hem not a bene,
> Ther woot no man aright what dremes mene.
>
> For prestes of the temple tellen this,
> That dremes been the revelaciouns
> Of goddes, and as wel they telle, y-wis,
> That they ben infernals illusiouns;
> And leches seyn, that of complexiouns
> Proceden they, or fast, or glotonye.
> Who woot in sooth thus what they signifye?
>
> Eek others seyn that thorugh impressiouns,
> As if a wight hath faste a thing in minde,
> That ther-of cometh swiche avisiouns;
> And othere seyn, as they in bokes finde,
> That, after tymes of the yeer by kinde,
> Men dreme, and that th'effect goth by the mone;
> But leve no dreem, for it is noght to done.
>
> Wel worth of dremes ay thise olde wyves,
> And treweliche eek augurie of thise foules;
> For fere of which men wenen her lyves,
> As ravenes qualm, or shryking of thise oules.
> To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is.
> Allas, allas, so noble a creature
> As is a man, shal drede swich ordure!

Pandarus is here a wise, as well as confident, doctor of the mind. The sequent invocation to live and to enjoy—

> Rys, lat us speke of lusty life in Troy—

even if Pandarus' particular conception of life and enjoyment is a crude one, is at least preferable, one might venture to think, to the dreams and self-pitying fantasies on which Troilus feeds his heart. The wisdom that is identified with Pandarus here is thus not a purely negative scepticism but carries with it a positive acceptance of life and a confident promise of possible ultimate self-mastery. But here we are admittedly at the upper limits of the human wisdom identified in this poem with Pandarus.

Having viewed the most important Pandarus element first in relation to Criseyde, second in relation to Troilus, we have, in a progress towards completeness, also to consider the poem as far as possible apart from Pandarus, and more particularly the lovers.

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The lovers were (we happen to know) pre-existent and belong basically—even Criseyde—to the courtly love convention. But even here that knowledge of the heart in which Chaucer's wisely tolerant and humane genius consists—for his tolerance, his catholicity of sympathy, is that of a superior understanding—triumphs. It is this Chaucerian knowledge which I propose particularly to notice though this will finally involve taking some account of the basic conventionality and of Chaucer's attitude to it. Chaucer, especially in the last book, provides an imaginative appreciation and yet non-appreciation —for such sympathetic understanding does not preclude criticism but rather involves it—even of the courtly love convention as it flowers banefully in its unlucky devotee.

The image of Criseyde—'in widowes habite blak'—in the temple where Troilus first sees her (Book One, stanzas 24–28, and 39–47) owes something to the goliardic image of the false and profane widow in church. Although she is to be to Troilus, and even partially is in basis, the courtly lady her rôle here is not dissimilar from that of the Wife of Bath at the funeral of her fourth husband (*Wyfe of Bath's Prologue*, lines 587–605). Throughout the passage there is the interplay of sacred and profane associations. To the temple (corresponding to a church) have come—

> . . . so many a lusty knight,
> So many a lady fresh and mayden bright.

It is a pagan festival as Chaucer may have remembered—the sensual note is dominant—and it is also to be a scene in a church satirically observed. Criseyde attracts attention and comment for her beauty. As A is the first letter of the alphabet so she is the first in beauty. There is something equivocal about her concealment under 'hir blake wede'—

> . . . under cloude blak so bright a sterre—

that suggests slyness as well as secrecy. Her humility of demeanour may not be a devotional humility but a show of womanly bashfulness arising from consciousness of her femininity, or it may be a pious disguise—

> And yet she stood ful lowe and stille alloon,
> Bihinden othere folk, in litel brede,
> And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,
> Simple of a-tyr . . .

yet she is sure of herself, conscious of the power of her beauty—

> With ful assured loking and manere.

With Troilus also, as he leads his 'yonge knightes' up and down in the temple—

> Biholding ay the ladyes of the toun—

the religious observances seem to be secondary to the profane interest in women—although he had as yet 'devocioun' (a religious term adopted by the love convention) to no one. If he observed the eyes of any knight or squire of his company rest on any woman

> He wolde smyle, and holden it folye.

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The irony (taken in relation to what is about to happen) of this tone of superiority, this pride of self-assurance, is that Troilus' innocence is to be proved that of immaturity and—in so far as it is not conventional—his youthful mockery of 'love's servants'—

> And seye him thus, 'god wot, she slepeth softe
> For love of thee, whan thou tornest ful ofte!'—

is born of inexperience and ignorance. The nemesis of this attitude follows (stanzas 39–47). Troilus 'with-inne the temple . . . pleyinge' is instantly struck—himself changed into the lover of the convention—when his eyes light on Criseyde. But from the beginning his love is secret, clandestine. (A motive suggested at first is that Troilus having mocked at those subject to love is ashamed to confess its influence over himself, but in any case the convention demanded concealment.) Chaucer's knowledge of the heart is never more triumphant than in this handling of a basically conventional situation. The womanishness of Criseyde, her feminine attractiveness, is shown as the source of her hold—

> . . . creature
> Was never lasse mannish in seminge.

The wonderful naturalness of her behaviour is itself a slyness and a bait. Troilus—

> Gan for to lyke hir mening and hir chere,
> Which somdel deynous was, for she leet falle
> Hir look a lite a-side, in swich manere,
> Ascaunces, 'what! may I not stonden here?'

In the analysis of the birth of love—

> And of hir look in him ther gan to quiken,
> So greet desir, and swich affeccioun,
> That in his hertes botme gan to stiken
> Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun—

although he

> Was ful unwar that love hadde his dwellinge
> With-inne the subtile stremes of hir yën—

there is already the kind of analytical insight that is developed and specialized in the poetry of the seventeenth century.

Even in the more decorative description (Book Two, stanzas 86–93) of how Troilus rides in triumph—'so lyk a man of armes and a knight'—up the street and brings Criseyde to her window—the moment corresponding to that in which Troilus first sees *her* in the temple and the first of a series of passings under her window that are stage-managed by Pandarus—the interest is centered in the human feelings involved and particularly in the effect on Criseyde's heart. We preparatorily glimpse the state in which Pandarus has left that heart.

> But straught in-to hir closet wente anoon,
> And sette here down as stille as any stoon,
> And every word gan up and doun to winde.

Then (stanza 88 *et seq.*)—

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But as she sat allone and thoughte thus,
Th'ascry aroos at skarmish al with-oute,
And men cryde in the strete, 'see, Troilus
Hath right now put to flight the Grekes route!'
With that gan al hir meynee for to shoute,
'A! go we see, caste up the latis wyde;
For thurgh this strete he moot to palays ryde

For other wey is fro the yate noon
Of Dardanus, ther open is the cheyne.'
With that com he and al his folk anoon
An esy pas rydinge, in routes tweyne,
Right as his happy day was, sooth to seyne,
For which, men say, may nought disturbed be
That shal bityden of necessitee.

This Troilus sat on his baye stede,
Al armed, save his heed, ful richely,
And wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,
On whiche he rood a pas, ful softely;
But swich a knightly sighte, trewely,
As was on him, was nought, with-outen faile,
To loke on Mars, that god is of batayle.

The humanness of Troilus—'an esy pas rydinge'—contrasts with the stiff, artificial impression of the Dido and Aeneas hunting picture in the *Legend of Dido*. Even Troilus' horse, in contrast to Aeneas' 'palfrey paper-whyt,' seems flesh and blood—'and wounded was his hors, and gan to blede.' The effect is more than simply pictorial, more than a visual suggestion of red drops. But there is an element in the passage itself—that represented by 'Mars, that god of batayle'—that the humanness of Troilus contrasts with.

His helm to-hewen was in twenty places,
That by a tissew heng, his bak bihinde,
His sheld to-dasshed was with swerdes and maces,
In which men mighte many an arwe finde
That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rinde;
And ay the peple cryde, 'here cometh our joye,
And, next his brother, holdere up of Troye!'

For which he wex a litel reed for shame,
Whan he the peple up-on him herde cryen,
That to biholde it was a noble game,
How sobreliche he caste doun his yën.
Cryseyde gan al his chere aspyen,
And leet so softe it in hir herte sinke,
That to hir-self she seyde, 'who yaf me drinke?'

The human naturalness triumphs in that last stanza first in the demeanour of Troilus—a bashfulness in the young hero that might be that of a lover—and above all, in the spectacle's effect—'who yaf me drinke?'—on Criseyde.

The description of the visit the women of Troy pay to Criseyde

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to say farewell (Book Four, stanzas 98–105) in the finely satiric observation it shows of social behaviour, the naturalness and life-likeness—felt in the movement—of its dialogue, and above all in the alteration caused by the knowledge and revelation of the heart, is an equally remarkable triumph of Chaucer's humanity. The point of the irony, and at the same time the pathos, is in the collision between the incompatible public, social life and the private, secret life of the heart. The women come to sympathize or rejoice with Criseyde, according to what they may feel to be the more tactful, but they fail to comprehend because they do not know. They sympathize but for the wrong reasons, assuming a different cause for the strange grief that in the end (when the social comedy turns for Criseyde into unendurable irony) they have to notice.

> But as men seen in toune, and al aboute,
> That wommen usen frendes to visyte,
> So to Criseyde of wommen com a route
> For pitous joye, and wenden hir delyte;
> And with hir tales, dere y-nough a myte,
> These wommen, whiche that in the cite dwelle,
> They sette hem doun, and seyde as I shal telle.
>
> Quod first that oon, 'I am glad, trewely,
> By-cause of yow, that shal your fader see.'
> A-nother seyde, 'y-wis, so nam not I;
> For al to litel hath she with us be.'
> Quod tho the thridde, 'I hope, y-wis, that she
> Shal bringen us the pees on every syde,
> That, whan she gooth, almighty god hir gyde!'
>
> The wordes and the wommannisshe thinges,
> She herde hem right as though she thennes were;
> For, god it wot, hir herte on other thing is,
> Although the body sat among hem there.
> Hir advertence is alwey elles-where;
> For Troilus ful faste hir soule soughte;
> With-outen word, alwey on him she thoughte.

The first two lines invoke social form and custom. The 'route of wommen' are performing a social ritual for 'pitous joye'—sorry she must leave them, glad for her sake that she will see her father, and perhaps glad also because they enjoy paying visits. There is no escaping them—'they sette hem doun'—however indisposed Criseyde is for such a visit. They say at once all the appropriate tactful things—'I am glad, trewely, by-cause of yow, that shal your fader see'—'So nam not I . . . for al to litel hath she with us be.' The background of the public misfortune is inevitably introduced in the course of these polite, good-natured remarks, and Criseyde's departure is related to the hope of a favourable turn in the political situation—

> I hope, y-wis, that she
> Shal bringen us the pees on every syde.

Criseyde's private grief being to her much more overwhelming, this

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concern for the public good only aggravates the irony. Then, in the third stanza, our attention is shifted to the heart of Criseyde—

> The wordes and the wommannisshe thinges,
> She herde hem right as though she thennes were.

With wonderful knowledge Chaucer presents—in the midst of all this solicitude—the absent mind—

> For, god it wot, hir herte on other thing is,
> Although the body sat among hem there—

the preoccupied heart by which tact and sympathy—uncomprehending and unknowing—are unheeded. The irony—and the pathos—reach their climax in the succeeding stanzas which describe how, unable to endure the ironic tension any longer, she breaks down in tears and they can only suppose, with amusing egoism, that she weeps because she must leave Troy and them. They weep, too, not knowing what they are weeping for. The theological terms—'body, soule, herte, hevene, helle'—are here as elsewhere used, being the most precise psychological terms to hand, to describe lovers' states of mind. The scene is finally placed as (another term with a religious significance) 'vanitee'—'after al this nyce vanitee' (stanza 105 *cf.* stanza 101 'swich vanitee')—the suggestion being not only that the women's comfort and sympathy are vain but perhaps also that their whole lives and conversation are vain.

Criseyde has sufficient in common with Pandarus—and with her lady visitors—to make her, in her complex life, independent to a considerable degree of the courtly convention from which nevertheless she emerges. Some part of the allegorical quality of the original Garden of the Rose still adheres to her garden (Book Two, stanzas 117–118). The three nieces, Flexippe, Tharbe and Antigone, and the crowd of women who attend her when she walks in it replace the personifications of the original, but accord her—as the 'yonge knightes' who accompany Troilus in the temple, and again when he rides beyond the walls to take a ceremonial farewell of Criseyde, accord him—a kind of processional state. The nightingale that later—when 'whyte thinges wexen dimme and donne'—sings against the moon 'upon a cedre grene' under Criseyde's 'chambre-wal,' and the bird allegory she dreams, belong to the conventional Italian landscape of love.

But, unlike Criseyde, Troilus retains, and remains, the outline of his original—the swooning, complaining lover of the *trouvère*—Petrarchan convention. Troilus' complainings, in so far as they are responded to sympathetically, as Pandarus certainly responds to them, are of course to that extent accepted as not unnatural—in the last book especially, where there is real cause for grief, they are musically, if diffusely, rendered which argues at least an imaginative sympathy—or at least their rejection is held in suspension. But Pandarus' mere presence produces, at the same time, an implicit criticism, even a satire, which from time to time he makes explicit, of these complainings and of the whole love convention which is their excuse—or, in terms of regarding Troilus as a 'psychological study,' his excessive complainings become felt, by contrast with

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Pandarus' humorous good sense, as an indulgence of self-pity which not only arrests our pity but at times tries our patience. There is just sufficient in the last book of a fresh love intrigue—the insinuations of Diomede and the now only too familiar equivocations of Criseyde (*e.g.* stanzas 141 *et seq.*)—

> I am disposed bet, so mote I go,
> Un-to my deeth, to pleyne and maken wo,
> What I shal after doon, I can not seye,
> But trewely, as yet me list not pleye.
>
> My herte is now in tribulacioun,
> And ye in armes bisy, day by day.
> Here-after, whan ye wonnen han the toun . . .
>
> If that I sholde of any Greek han routhe,
> It sholde be your-selven, by my trouthe!
>
> I sey not therfore that I wol yow love,
> Ne I sey not nay, but in conclusioun,
> I mene wel, by god that sit above.

—sufficient to form an ironic, revelatory reminiscence of the earlier 'seduction.' But this is subsidiary. The last book is predominantly a musical lament—the music peculiarly unforced, no strain, no feeling of effort disturbing the outflow of Troilus' gentle giving-tongue to grief. Pandarus—as well as Criseyde—recedes into the background. He evokes once more, appealing to it in vain as being a world of the natural enjoyment of the heart, the *trouvère* world through which move—dancing, singing, playing, round-cheeked—the ladies of mediaeval convention,[5] from among whom Criseyde herself has originally emerged; but only for it to become momentarily a contrasting background to the complaining grief-stricken lover left solitarily in the foreground (stanzas 64–66).

> For she, that of his herte berth the keye,
> Was absent, lo, this was his fantasye,
> That no wight sholde make melodye.[6]

The double suggestion of 'keye' enriches these closing lines of the passage unusually for Chaucer. The more Chaucerian significance is possibly in that 'fantasye' which Chaucer so often uses as meaning a '*foolish* imagining.' Unwilling to be comforted by Pandarus, Troilus revisits Criseyde's empty house (stanzas 76–77), haunts the

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[5] *cp.*
> I saw hir daunce so comlily,
> Carole and singe so swetely,
> Laughe and pleye so womanly . . .
> (*The Book of the Duchesse*).
>
> And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.
> Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde,
> That at a revel whan that I see you daunce . . .
> (*Balade to Rosemounde*).

[6] *cp.* Dorigen in the *Frankeleyns Tale*—
> For she ne saugh him in the daunce go.

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places where in the past he remembers her *dance, laugh, play,* and *sing* (stanzas 81–83). Again (stanzas 96–97)—

> Upon the walles faste eek wolde he walke,
> And on the Grekes ost he wolde see,
> And to him-self right thus he wolde talke,
> 'Lo, yonder is myn owne lady free,
> Or elles yonder, ther tho tentes be!
> And thennes comth this eyr, that is so sote,
> That in my soule I fele it doth me bote.
>
> And hardely this wind, that more and more
> Thus stoundemele encreseth in my face,
> Is of my ladyes depe sykes sore.
> I preve it thus, for in non othere place
> Of al this toun, save onliche in this space
> Fele I no wind that souneth so lyk peyne;
> It seyth, "allas! why twinned be we tweyne?"'

Though irony underlies its extravagance—Criseyde, we know, is false—the conceit (for it might almost be called such) is yet natural, emotionally true, and not merely fancifully beautiful. Chaucer has here entered into very complete imaginative sympathy with one whom—by means chiefly of the Pandarus juxta-position—he remains critically antipathetic to.

The ultimate criticism of the love extravagance is not, however, in relation to Pandarus if we are to accept the final stanzas of the poem. These stanzas, at any rate, provide the modern reader with the key to the traditional morality against which the story would have been set. They explicitly place the passionate lovers in relation to the established values which Chaucer does not challenge; for the poem is no glorification of romantic passion. So when Troilus' soul rising above the earth condemns (stanza 261):

> The blinde lust, the which that may not last,

and when again profane love is described (stanza 263) as 'worldly vanitee,' the particular voice may not sound Chaucerian—unless that of a Chaucer in age, sickness and proximity to death—but in as much as it is deeply mediaeval it states what Chaucer has perhaps all the time implicitly accepted. The divine love is set above the profane love.

> And loveth him, the which that right for love
> Upon a cros, our soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene a-bove;
> For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al hoolly on him leye.
> And sin he best to love is, and most meke,
> What nedeth feyned loves for to seke?

Troilus has 'leyde his herte al hoolly' on Criseyde instead of on Christ. That would appear to be the ultimate mediaeval judgment. It might be argued that this need not—and therefore ought not to—have been added, or at least that the judgment need not have been phrased so harshly. Those who find this conclusion disharmonious

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with the poem's tone of tolerance perhaps correspond with those who would ignore the context of Dante's Paolo and Francesca episode as if this apotheosis of types of passionate lovers absorbed in themselves and granted what they most of all desire and—the stern context implies—deserve, the torment of an ecstatic eternity in each other's arms, appears only accidentally in the *Inferno*.

But whether or not we regard the moral end of *Troilus and Criseyde* as superadded and arbitrary it is certain that the poem itself compels us to be aware of deficiencies in Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus, and that this is no negligible part of Chaucer's meaning. If Pandarus is rational by contrast with Troilus, and can give worldly advice, he is deficient morally and spiritually—in this respect above all an inferior. In Criseyde's case also that naturalness of human behaviour and demeanour partly arises from an almost complete absence in her of a moral sense. She exhibits her father as a type of senile Covetousness (Book Four, stanzas 200–201),

> Desyr of gold shal so his sowle blende,
> That, as me lyst . . .

to indicate the particular moral weakness which as a shameless opportunist she intends to exploit. This radical disrespect, which she and Pandarus share, extends blasphemously also to the gods of her father's sacred knowledge—

> For goddes speken in amphibologyes,
> And, for a sooth, they tellen twenty lyes.

For all her complicatedness she is in important respects undeveloped, morally a child. As such she lays herself open to deceptions felt as betrayals, and is equally a danger to others through her irresponsibility. Every important poem is, as Arnold said, a work of appraisal; and the tolerant, sympathetic humanity that permeates Chaucer's poem is not of the kind that implies any suspension or blunting of critical judgment.

Mr. Middleton Murry fixes on the suggestion that Criseyde comes to Troilus' bedside as his physician (as Christ is, elsewhere, the 'soules leche'); and finds that significant of Chaucer's wisely tolerant humanity. If we turn to the description of the lovers' union itself the sensual rapture is treated on the plane of religious allegory if we are to judge from the fact that the joys of the body are spoken of in terms of the soul risen from purgatory into divine union.[7]

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[7]Chaucer is at home with the soul and the body distinction (see Book Four, stanzas 44, 45) as the seventeenth-century metaphysicals though he is of course without their subtlety and ingenuity in pursuing and maintaining the distinction through all the involvements of intimate relationships. 'O, wery ghost that errest to and fro,' and the play with 'eyen' in the second stanza referred to might repay attention. There seems to be a connection between scholastic verbal habit and Petrarchan. One or two comparisons showing the grief of Troilus—

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Thus sondry peynes bringen folk to hevene . . .
For out of wo in blisse now they flete . . .

The system of courtly love had already taken over the whole terminology of divine love. But the use of such terms here does not in itself imply on Chaucer's part any complacent identification, or confusion, of earthy with divine joys; theological terms are used elsewhere by Chaucer simply to describe psychophysical conditions without any such implication. That there is, on the other hand, some such confusion in the minds of the lovers—a confusion perhaps inherent in the courtly love 'idealism'—is suggested rather by the disenchanting contrast of what seems to me the distinct ribaldry of the uncle-and-niece encounter the following morning. Chaucer's tolerant humanity is not quite of the kind Mr. Murry and others suggest. Rather it shows itself as a peculiar serenity in the midst even of painful knowledge of human weakness. It seems to proceed from an inner quality of spirit; and to be a quality as of grace rather than a quality with difficulty achieved through a self-torturing discipline; it belonged perhaps to Chaucer's civilization. That feeling of intellectual strain and spiritual travail that is such an important aspect of the rhythm of Donne—or again of Hopkins' last sonnets—is quite absent from Chaucer. It would be unwise to claim that Chaucer is more profoundly civilized than Marvell; but he belongs to what seems perhaps a more spiritually spacious and harmoniously catholic civilization than that of the seventeenth century.

JOHN SPEIRS.

Y-bounden in the blake bark of care . . . —

seem just beginning to move into the sphere of suitability for Empsonian analysis. Mr. Empson does indeed analyse a passage of Troilus and Criseyde though, significantly perhaps, not so confidently as seventeenth-century poetry.

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A LETTER ON THE MUSIC CRITICISM OF W. H. MELLERS

The Editors, *Scrutiny*.

Sirs,—

The subject of this letter is Mr. Mellers' music criticism, and its excessive length, for which we must immediately apologize, can only be justified because we feel that this body of critical writing is intrinsically well worth detailed consideration. We are prompted to write by an impression, which has been long-maturing, that the articles that Mr. Mellers has been contributing regularly to *Scrutiny* are not tempered with the same degree of critical rigour as the generality of articles in *Scrutiny*. Re-reading the 200-odd pages of criticism that he has published during the last six years reveals at once a marked and disconcerting facility of expression that seems at times to lead to little more than verbiage:

> '. . . it is, I say, very deliciously risible to read all this.'
>
> 'The beautiful violin Concerto, in which the soloist showers a soaring golden flight of lyrical rococo over and into the orchestra's sonorous harmonic framework, exhibits Delius' method at its ripest perfection.'

And this suggestion of uncritical superficiality is confirmed by a related defect that emerges very clearly, and that is the frequency with which Mr. Mellers contradicts himself:

of Bartok:

> 'insane like much of the later work of Bartok,' Dec., 1936.
>
> 'the music of Bartok before he got stuck in the bog of sadistic obsession with discord may exert, in a minor way, a stimulating influence,' Sept., 1936.

compared with:

> 'the most significant composer with reference to the immediate future of musical language,' Mar., 1941.
>
> 'Almost all other music pales into insignificance besides this assured mastery,' Jan., 1942.

or of Van Dieren:

> 'I am not able personally to feel very enthusiastic,' Sept., 1936.

compared with:

> 'that the consummation is serene seems to me unquestionable,' Dec., 1936.

Indeed, when Mr. Mellers admits, after an eulogy of that work, that he 'was completely baffled and unimpressed at a first hearing of the *Chinese Symphony*,' one admires his honesty but can only deplore that he should exercise this virtue at the expense of *Scrutiny's* limited space.

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This suspicion of irresponsibility to which we have just referred receives support when one remembers how many composers Mr. Mellers recommends in the most glowing terms: Sibelius and Elgar (each of these Mr. Mellers has described as the last great composer to be endorsed by his society), Fauré, Berlioz, Vaughan Williams ('definitely a great composer'), Couperin le Grand (whose church music is 'as profound as anything written in the eighteenth century, not excepting Bach'), Bartok, Dvorak (whose D minor Symphony is 'among the supreme achievements of the nineteenth century'), are all composers on whom Mr. Mellers has indulged his weakness for the superlative; and they are no more than a random selection. We are not attempting, it must be emphasized, to discredit Mr. Mellers' critical wisdom; indeed, we agree for the most part with his general valuations. It is rather the ecstatic tone of these judgments that we deplore, since inevitably it suggests, when taken in conjunction with the obvious facility of expression, that often he has only a brief and superficial acquaintance with the music under discussion. How much music by Wiener, for instance, or by Ives has Mr. Mellers heard (or studied from the score) repeatedly and intensively, one wonders? Can one be sure that here and elsewhere he hasn't made sweeping judgments that subsequent hearings, or even second hearings as in the case of Van Dieren, would lead him to modify and even contradict? Maybe not; and we would readily concede (without innuendo) that Mr. Mellers has obviously an ear surprisingly good at the first hearing. It is simply that his critical tone inevitably raises doubts. Indeed, some time ago it seemed well within the bounds of probability (and certainly of Mr. Mellers' talents) that he would eventually pronounce Bruckner to be a great composer. So far we have been disappointed; though shortly afterwards he decided that Mahler was the last of 'that great line that, beginning with Haydn, extended through Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Bruckner,' and so it would seem that Bruckner is great by reason of nationality if nothing else.

And another reason for being suspicious of so much enthusiasm is that Mr. Mellers has dealt, in detail, with none of the unquestionably greatest composers. Indeed, he has written at length about no composer earlier than Berlioz (and he is considerably the earliest), and has referred to established composers only by way of rather unsatisfying cross-comparison. One's reasons for demanding a more extensive treatment of earlier composers are, in general, that one would welcome such assistance from Mr. Mellers simply for lack of any other; but also, to relate the demand to his own criticism, because one cannot but feel the need for a few standards of reference and comparison. It may well be that Couperin le Grand and Dvorak wrote music as supremely great as Mr. Mellers asserts (though we venture to doubt it); but the claim would be more convincing if one knew exactly how great, in this event, he feels Bach or Beethoven to be. And the delicate gradations of value that he draws between the works of a comparatively unknown composer, this air of super-sensitive refinement of judgment, would be more acceptable if also directed upon one or two composers with

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whose work one might be expected to have a detailed acquaintance. As it is, one cannot escape a certain uneasiness lest Mr. Mellers' vigour and impulsiveness are products of his zest for a chase as such, and that he is relatively uncertain of his bearings where Bach and Beethoven are concerned—uncertain, that is, not of their general importance but of the comparative importance of their individual works. And such misgivings would largely be dispelled were Mr. Mellers to convince his readers by establishing beforehand, *and in detail*, the precise importance he attaches to the unequal output of Bach, of Mozart, and of Beethoven.

To leave, then, these general considerations and to come at the criticism itself, we are in no doubt of the considerable difficulty of saying anything decisive in words about a creation in sound. Nor, indeed, is Mr. Mellers. In writing *about* the practice of criticism he has always been most careful not to make exaggerated claims:

> 'What the genuine critic does is to train the mind of the listener to seize on only those particulars which are, or seem to the best of the critic's comprehension to be, strictly relevant to the sincere response to the *musical* experience involved.'

On the whole, Mr. Mellers is himself remarkably successful at clearing the air, and at describing a piece of music in such a way as to ensure that his reader will, if capable of understanding, listen to it in a *certain* and not in *any* fashion next time; he will know what to listen for, and will have some idea in future of what is primary and what secondary in importance, *e.g.*:

> 'in the magnificent passage beginning "I have a sinne of feare that when I have spunne" we may note how the anguished discord on "feare" emerges with exquisite fluidity in the melodic lines from the muffled repeated notes (on a simple minor triad) of the preceding bar; how the harmonic catch-in-the-breath on "last thred" has its counterpart in the quivering resilience of the rhythm.'

This is excellent textual analysis of the kind desiderated in the above quotation. But self-evidently such analysis makes no attempt to indicate what 'sort of value may be attributed to the experience the music precisely is,' as Mr. Mellers elsewhere proposes as a function of technical criticism. Yet, in saying this, one recollects that he has stated that 'in no art more than in music has criticism been vitiated by the refusal to realize that a judgment of sensibility is ultimately a moral judment,' and one cannot help wondering whether perhaps he intends that his textual analysis shall imply a valuation. When, for instance, he speaks of a melody as being 'sombrely intense,' a second theme as 'more suave and gentle,' or when he writes that 'a melody of sustained poise and dignity is dissected and extended to produce a multitude of lyrical figures which, coagulating in the theme of the most serene gravity, become the subject of an elegiac fugal coda,'—when he writes his analysis in these emotionally descriptive terms, what, one asks, does he intend? Is he making or implying a judgment of value? Because

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such a judgment, if it is to be 'ultimately a moral judgment,' can hardly subsist on emotional definition alone. Indeed, in attempting to pin down the listener to a specific response or interpretation by means of such descriptive terminology (*cf.* also the quotation at the beginning of this letter), Mr. Mellers is really not far removed from the critics whom he despises for saying that 'the degree or nature of the "loveliness" of a melody or what-else, is indescribable.' Nor, in fact, is he doing anything diametrically opposed to Pater although the emotional evocation has changed its character. Pater's manner always has the effect of diverting one's attention away from the work of art, whereas Mr. Mellers admittedly keeps the work well in view. But largely this appears to be a case of Mr. Mellers' greater competence at using Pater's general method, and even with Mr. Mellers one is frequently uncertain why he has chosen to describe the work as he does, what judgment he hopes to enforce in this manner.

And that, really, returns one to the crux of the matter: how to make the value judgment that is ultimately a moral judgment too. Mr. Mellers would seem to depend on two distinct methods. On the one hand, he suggests a valuation by relating the nature of the composer's achievement as an individual to the social elements that either impede or contribute to his work. Criticism of this kind Mr. Mellers has defined as depending on an 'Historical Perspective.' On the other hand, there is the technical criticism that can be made of music. And here it is difficult to escape an impression that, for all the qualifications and exceptions he constantly makes, Mr. Mellers is an advocate of polyphony for polyphony's sake. In his article, *Harmony and Composition*, Mr. Rubbra offers the following simplication in a paper which Mr. Mellers defended with great vehemence when it was first read at a public meeting some years ago:

> 'Melody is the successive use of any of these twelve sounds (the equally spaced semitones), counterpoint is a combination of such melodic structures, and harmony is the result.'

Mr. Mellers himself has 'equated classicism with the vocal, melodic and polyphonic discipline—the "natural" musical forms,' and he has written of Rubbra:

> 'it is by his melodic utterance that a composer must stand or fall.'
>
> 'Since he is essentially a melodic composer it follows that Rubbra is also a contrapuntal one.'
>
> 'The most uncompromising harmonic harshness is justified if it is polyphonically logical.'
>
> '. . . the climax has asserted its full *musical*—its structurally and polyphonically logical—effect.'

The impression that Mr. Mellers attaches positive value to polyphony as such, cannot be escaped. And his justification, one assumes, is that polyphony is the *natural* musical form. But precisely because he calls in Nature to help him out does he commit absurdities like those quoted. Harmonic harshness cannot be justified, except

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perhaps to students of Harmony, because it is polyphonically logical; it can only be justified if it succeeds in its musical context, just as most of Debussy's harmonic harshness succeeds though the music is not polyphonic at all. In the same way the 'full musical effect' is not of necessity synonymous with being 'polyphonically logical.' And finally, Mozart is certainly the most 'essentially melodic composer' in the history of music; and yet it simply doesn't follow that he is *therefore* a contrapuntal composer: the slow movements of many of his piano Concerti, for example, consist largely of almost pure and unaccompanied diatonic melody, supported if at all by a harmony of an excessively simple diatonic structure; while that standard example, the last movement of the *Jupiter*, is *contrapuntally* a very elementary exercise, well within the competence of nearly any eighteenth-century practitioner, though *musically* it is magnificent Mozart. We are not suggesting that Mr. Mellers only discovers excellence in polyphonic music, but that for him polyphony tends to imply excellence; while a lack of polyphony results in music which, though no doubt equally excellent, leads inevitably towards the predominance of harmony as such and ultimately to mere noise, a morass from which the only escape is through a return to the principles of polyphony. But this analysis, even if just, makes it all but impossible to explain technically the supreme excellence of much non-polyphonic music, since it runs counter to the natural musical forms. But to us, though we do not offer any method of assessing in technical terms the value of non-polyphonic music (or, indeed, any other), a theory that would involve differentiating, by an appeal to the natural, between the *Chromatic Fantasia* and the *Fugue* of Bach seems hardly to be recommended.

There only remains, then, Mr. Mellers' Historical Perspective. One's first reaction, on reading his criticism with this in mind, is to regret that his own Historical Perspective should be so inextricably bound up with the vague generalization. For instance, to what is Mr. Mellers referring when he writes: 'There is all the glory and intoxication of the Imperial Epoch in Berlioz, and there is also the bitterness of the collapse'? The only Imperial Epoch Berlioz knew was that of the Second Empire, which collapsed ten years after his death; and the only collapse he could have known was that of the First Empire, but as he was only twelve years old at the time he could have known but little of the bitterness of this collapse and even less of the previous glory and intoxication. Or, to take a very different sample, Mr. Mellers writes: 'Only by studying the sixteenth century idiom in relation to the impetus behind it—the Church and an extremely homogeneous domestic milieu. . . .' To begin with one is somewhat surprised at this postulation of a 'sixteenth century idiom'; when one considers that in painting and literature this century produced Raphael, El Greco, Brueghel, Cervantes, Rabelais, Tasso, Spenser and Marlowe amongst others, the phrase, even if applied exclusively to music, suggests an unwarrantable simplification. And what follows confirms one's

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impression of blanket-phraseology, since 'an extremely homogeneous domestic milieu' certainly could not be described as the typical characteristic of a period that saw Luther's 95 Theses published, the end of feudalism in England and France, Benvenuto Cellini, the Inquisition, the conquest of Mexico, and Galileo. In fact, Mr. Mellers appears to be quite out of touch with the emotional climate of the sixteenth century, and to be relying on vague impression.

And finally, lest these be thought isolated slips, we would refer the reader to Mr. Mellers' essay on Fauré, where he attempts to account, not only for the peculiar poise of this composer, but also and more ambitiously to explain the possible relations between a composer and civilization, taking the latter 'to indicate concern for the higher humane virtues, virtues of spiritual deportment and æsthetic cultivation.' But obviously, to mention one's first reaction, such an attempt demands a defined conception of what constitutes a civilization, as distinct from an enumeration of the various qualities 'indicated' by civilized living which is all that Mr. Mellers' definition offers. One has in mind, for instance, the question as to whether there is such an entity as an American or a Soviet or a Chinese civilization to-day, and if so in what respects, from the point of view of definition, they differ from such concepts as Mediterranean civilization or even Nordic civilization. In short, the word is hopelessly vague and can only profitably be used after considerable clarification. Mr. Mellers, however, never seems to feel any need for such clarification, and uses the word as little more than a gesture, signifying nothing clearly conceived, in the direction of culture. Thus, to enumerate a few instances, he isolates for discussion composers like Bach, Palestrina and Marenzio, who 'express their civilization—and of course their attitude towards it—*through* their music'; or (noting the undefined significance of the inverted commas) like Van Dieren, 'whose "civilization" is catholic and European,' and Busoni, 'whose "civilization" is cosmopolitan'; or, by way of contrast, like Berlioz, 'too fiery and original a genius passively to submit to any one mode of civilization' (in contrast, perhaps, to Mozart 'whose music is probably the most civilized the world has ever known'). The elaborate exposition of the varieties of past and current civilizations, however, is a little confounded when we come to Sibelius who, 'enjoying the advantages of a civilization [presumably Finnish] in some respects at least comparable with that of Mozart,' exemplifies 'what the relation between the modern composer and civilization—if it existed at all—might be expected to be.' So, for all that has gone before, there seems some doubt about the existence now of any civilization, at any rate for the modern composer. And so, a little apprehensively perhaps, we come to Fauré himself, who 'creates in his music French civilization as it ideally might have been,' whatever that may imply. Among many other virtues too numerous to mention, Fauré's music has, it seems, a *charm* 'synonymous with his apprehension of the *parfum impérissable*, the exquisite flower of the traditional Mediterranean

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humanities' that persists in Van Dieren, and 'this European grace is revealed in the Monteverdi-like characteristics of his art.' And one may reasonably wonder what this Mediterranean civilization is that persists to-day in a few individuals (for all the doubts in the case of Sibelius), and has now become synonymous with 'European grace.' One thinks of Spanish, French, Venetian, Roman, Neapolitan, Sicilian, Greek, and Moorish cultures as presumably being Mediterranean; but can they helpfully be fused into one Mediterranean civilization which is also catholic; or are they not separate individual civilizations like Sibelius' Finnish civilization, if indeed the word can be used in this way at all? And how, anyway, can a Mediterranean and catholic civilization be the same as this 'European grace,' which must be largely, if not predominantly, non-Mediterranean and Protestant? In short, Mr. Mellers makes it plain that an indispensable preliminary to any discussion of the relationship between a composer and civilization should surely have been a definition of civilization and of its possible varieties, and a clarification of the heterogeneous pressures and influences that a civilization may exert on the individual in general and the artist in particular.

One then comes to the music itself, and immediately one is a little startled to read that the 'tiny life-sperm' of Fauré's 'recreation of ideal French civilization' turns out to be a 'private fancy-world of paradisal gardens and twilit balconies'; a remarkable biological evolution would seem to be promised. The adult organism is not described, however, except as representing (one had feared as much) 'a victory of civilization.' What we do get is a description of the *Requiem*: 'its faith is not Christian exactly,' it is 'not metaphysical,' 'it takes account of spiritual issues' but 'spiritually is limited by the bounds of civilized human existence,' 'its religion is an idealized humanism for the ideal human society'; in short, it is 'a quintessence of Mediterranean culture,' that culture, in fact, which previously described as Catholic is now not Christian exactly and not even metaphysical. Such a hotch-potch is inexcusable. And finally, as being decisive to the issue, the *Requiem* is said to be 'worthy of Fra Angelico.' The analogy is perhaps a suitable one since this artist was much admired by the contemporaries of Fauré, and is one which incidentally is also adopted by the author of the gramophone notes of the *Requiem*. But it seems doubtful whether Mr.Mellers realizes that Fra Angelico is no longer the rage he used to be in the days of the Pre-Raphaelites, and that to-day his art appears thin, emaciated, desiccated, merely decorative and orderly. And perhaps in keeping with so much 'civilization,' Fauré's *Requiem* seems to us, when compared with such a work as Verdi's *Otello*, for instance, to be bloodless and dry, a consummation above all of the French intellect. But Mr. Mellers never makes the ultimate moral judgment.

It may seem that, in all we have said, we have offered very little of a positive nature. But then Mr. Mellers seems to us to be quite sufficiently positive, and our main object has been to curb this enthusiasm somewhat. Precisely because the practice of music

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criticism is in its infancy, every care ought to be taken not to dash ahead with vague generalizations. But, by way of offering something positive that we feel needs doing at once, we would be glad to have articles from Mr. Mellers on the following topics:

1. As few of *Scrutiny's* readers are likely to have a command of musical technicalities, Mr. Mellers might give a résumé (if possible with musical notation) of the evolution of musical forms and structures; together with certain elementary definitions. What the reader requires is the information, easily enough imparted, that would enable him to understand this quotation:

> 'he effects very delicate elliptical key-transitions, so that one wonders whether his conception of modulation isn't as close to the "cadential" conception of the polyphonists as to the key-relationship system of classical European Music.'

And this exposition of technical terms, undertaken as a survey of the development of music, might well be accompanied by an investigation of the emotive properties of the raw material of music, of the emotional significance or nervous effect of augmented 2nd's, major 7th's, diminished 9th's, etc., and of canon, contrary motion, sonata form, consecutive 5th's, etc.

2. A detailed appreciation of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. One would like to know, for instance, how Mr. Mellers would account for the musical effect achieved by Bach's D minor Piano Concerto, the first movement of which seems on examination to be virtually without melody or invention of any kind. And one would be interested to have his estimate of the comparative value of Beethoven's 5th and 6th Symphonies and of the 5th Piano Concerto.

The central problems of musical appreciation would then have been dealt with. And any subsequent exploration into the lesser-known regions, that activity which Mr. Mellers undertakes so energetically and fearlessly, would then stand in relation to judgments that are more easily checked, and the reader would know more clearly his own compass bearings when with Mr. Mellers he finds himself surrounded by virgin forest.

BORIS FORD.
STEPHEN REISS.

March, 1942.

A REPLY

I HAVE been invited to reply to the above and do so with some reluctance; not because I doubt my ability to answer but because the amount of space occupied both by the prosecution and the defence seems to me, in these days of paper shortage, unjustified by the importance of the subject.

This is not the first time I have been accused of a critical (or perhaps uncritical) approach such as would not normally be found

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in *Scrutiny* (though previous correspondents have been more polite), so I'll begin by saying that it never has been my intention to provide a '*Scrutiny*' music-criticism and that even if I had had that intention it couldn't have been carried out, for the obvious reason that *Scrutiny's* public is not specifically a musical one. I have never had any more pretentious aim than to make a few points about the situation in the musical world which I believe needed making, and to foster in my readers an enthusiasm sufficient to persuade them to investigate the music I talk about at first hand. To Ford and Reiss my enthusiasm is itself suspect, so inevitably there is little left of my writing. If this were the experience of the generality of *Scrutiny* readers (but I believe it is not) I should be sorry; but I still shouldn't be ashamed of the method I have adopted, whether it be considered appropriate to *Scrutiny* or not.

I do not see why facility of expression should necessarily imply facility of thought, though obviously it is not for me flatly to deny this charge. I will merely point out that of the examples given the first was from an article which was intended to be funny, so perhaps may pass without comment either way; and that I do not admit that the second is verbiage at all. It was not an attempt to describe Delius's technique (this is not very difficult to do) but to refer in emotional terms to Delius's emotional method, the adjectives being carefully chosen to that end. An analysis sent me by another correspondent convinces me that in its context the passage worked; I wouldn't much wish to defend it; neither do I consider it, in its context, important enough to use against me.

As for my self-contradictions, all the judgments afterwards reversed or modified were taken from my very first piece of writing in the September, 1936, *Scrutiny*. At that time I had no idea of becoming a music critic; I was asked to review Stravinsky's book and made around it a few general comments with which I still hold. That the article contained many particular judgments which I modified when I took up the study of contemporary music seriously is natural enough, and I never before heard that it is irresponsible to reconsider one's judgments in the light of maturer experience. Actually my contradictions aren't very violent; I apologized about van Dieren at the time, and there was a time when it did look as though Bartók might become bogged in a sadistic obsession with discord; the best of his late work was certainly not widely known here in 1936—some of it hadn't even been written!

After having been attacked for years by the 'musical public' for being too exclusive in my tastes, it is refreshing to be attacked from within the camp, as it were, for being irresponsibly inclusive. I submit that it is Ford's and Reiss's list which is irresponsible and that there is nothing in my writing to countenance the lumping together of that array of composers as (presumably) all great to the same degree and in the same ways. Perhaps it's just advancing age that brings increased tolerance; but I don't think that because I find as I get older I can get pleasure from more kinds of music (even Bax!) that means that I've become incapable of discriminating

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between the *kinds* of pleasure, and I still believe that these discriminations are mostly clear enough in my writing. That Couperin's terrific Passacaille from the B minor Ordre, the noble Chaconne called *La Favorite*, or the recorded *Troisième Leçon des Ténèbres* are in their very different way as fine as anything in Bach I most soberly and at the same time passionately believe, and while this doesn't mean that I think Couperin *in toto* as great a composer as Bach, it does point to the radical distinction between my attitude and that of my critics. To my mind one will never enjoy Bach or any composer fully until one is aware of his position in the evolution of European music; I believe it is much more important that I should try to make people investigate the music of men like Couperin and Buxtehude and Sweelinck (I choose the names at random and might pertinently have cited Perotin, Machaut, Dufay, Josquin, Gabrieli, Scheidt, Monteverde and all the masters of the 12th to the 17th centuries) than that I should tell them which among Bach's or Beethoven's works I think they ought to approve of.[1] We shall never have any real musical education until we can get people to listen to music, and in particular pre-eighteenth-century music, for its own sake, with reference to its own inherent values, and until we realize that virtually three-quarters (at a modest estimate) of the great music of Europe is unknown to the musical public. That this leads to serious distortions in our judgments of the accepted values should be clear; and to right those distortions is the first and most urgent task of the musical educator. If Ford and Reiss protest that this is merely an example of my uncritical enthusiasm I can only retort that many men of much greater distinction than either of us seem to share my belief and that the number of composers I admire does not seem to me very large considering that we are dealing not with one country but with the music of all Europe through some nine centuries. Apart from this general approach I have dealt mainly with contemporary music because that seemed most relevant to a periodical concerned not specifically with music but with the position of 'culture' in the modern world; and naturally, having lectured for some two years in detail on Bach and Beethoven, I resent the insinuation, made without any attempt at evidence, that I do not know my way about their works. This being the sort of charge that in the old days would have been called 'ungentlemanly,' I will also put it on record that I possess every scrap of published music by Charles Ives and Jean Wiéner and also some that is not commercially available.

A few minor points before I leave this aspect of the charge. In a slightly different sense I think it would be legitimate to claim

[1]One rather obvious reason why my writing seems 'enthusiastic' is that I've written mainly about composers I approve of, for the reasons explained above, and have not indulged in the 'debunking' articles in which *Scrutiny* in the literary field in its early days rightly specialized. A reputation for critical rigour, if wanted, is easier to acquire negatively than positively.

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either Elgar or Sibelius as the last great composer to be socially endorsed; I don't think I would now call Vaughan Williams a great composer, though I am sure he is a great figure in our musical history; and my case about Dvorak's second symphony would have been clearer if I had referred to it as one of the supreme expressions of the nineteenth century *ethos* (for I would wish to allow for the fact that that ethos is one I don't much approve of). That Bruckner has a place within the great Austrian symphonic tradition is simply a statement of fact. I know too little about his work to know whether he's a great composer himself, but Ford's and Reiss's dogmatism is nearly as deplorable as their facetiousness. In the matter of 'tone,' indeed, I prefer ecstasy to facetiousness; and I think it's the less irresponsible.

In general I'm not—at present—much concerned about music *criticism*; musical education suffers just as much nowadays from the pervasiveness of a nineteenth-century upbringing as did literary criticism ten or twenty years ago (suffers, indeed, more, for literary criticism never suggested that all poetry previous to the 18th century was exclusively devoted to 'knocking the language into shape') and I'd regard myself primarily as a musical *educator* as a preparation for criticism. It seems to me there are two main tasks which musical educators are up against before one can think elaborately about the technique of criticism: one is to make the majority of intelligent people sufficiently interested in contemporary music to be willing to commit themselves to judgments about it (never mind whether they're 'right') both because it's contemporary music that we should be most immediately in tune with and because it's only here we can listen to music more or less without preconceived notions about it which to some extent inhibit our listening; and the second task (following from the first) is to establish a more balanced attitude to musical tradition than that which the nineteenth century approach has fostered. The first of these aims I've been working towards for some time; the second was inaugurated in the series of articles beginning in the last number of *Scrutiny*. In the course of it Ford and Reiss will learn what I think about Bach and Mozart and Beethoven; but I want them to see them in relation to the broader issues which involve many other composers, rightly and wrongly designated 'minor,' and not the other way round. Ford and Reiss may not sympathize with this aim, but I hope they will admit that it exists, and I'm certain I believe it to be a truer approach than theirs.

The point about the nature of my criticism is really answered in the above paragraph. I'm not quite sure what the point they are trying to make is, since they admit that, in general, they agree with my value-judgments and that, in general, I keep as closely to the text of the music as is consistent with saying anything about the kind of experience the music is. I have never made more pretentious claims for my writing than this, either in theory or practice, nor was I aware that I indulged in delicate gradations or had an air of super-sensitive refinement of judgment, a charge which Scruti-

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neers often seem to hurl at each other as a mark of disapproval. Certainly I attempt to correlate 'technique' and emotion, but I do not regard these correlations as definitive; I am satisfied if they encourage other people to make moral definitions themselves.

I hope my article in the last number of *Scrutiny* will have demonstrated that Ford and Reiss interpret my case about polyphony naïvely. (Their letter was written before the publication of the article.) Most of this account of polyphony is no crackbrained scheme of mine but is held not only by most accepted musical thinkers but by the majority of composers over the past few centuries. Ford and Reiss isolate three of my remarks about polyphony and call them 'absurd.' They do not explain why they are absurd and I submit that even out of their context they are perfectly sensible. An harmonic harshness that is polyphonically logical *will* succeed in its musical context and its success cannot be separated from its polyphonic logic; but it is not an inevitable corollary of this that a dissonance which is not polyphonically logical must therefore not succeed. The evidence for my supposed contention that music is good *because* it is polyphonic I believe to exist solely in my critics' imaginations; certainly they have not produced it. I would maintain that the fundamental basis of musical structures is polyphony, for the reasons given in my mediaeval article, and the very rules of 'harmony' only enforce the contention that musical idioms decay if they become *too* remote from the voice and polyphonic thought. The centrality of the voice and melody is the important point, and Mozart illustrates it almost as clearly as Bach or Palestrina (for the arpeggio harmonies in the piano concerto arias are precisely so simple that the melodic line could stand harmonically unsupported and make complete musical sense—the interest is not harmonically centred). To insist on the centrality of the voice and polyphonic principles is not to deny the magnificence of the chromatic Fantasia (which anyway is close to vocal declamation and preserves considerable independence in the inner parts) or even the beauty of the preludes of Debussy. But I will remind my critics that Bach himself always felt that the fantasia required resolution, as it were, in the subsequent fugue; and that Debussy himself was well aware of what I thought was by now pretty generally established, namely, that his idiom, authentic and admirable as it is for his own purposes, is a dead-end in musical history. The excellence of much homophonic music is, indeed, not in question and is not *more* difficult to explain than the excellence of polyphonic music, but I certainly believe that the present is a time when it is most urgent that the lesson of polyphony as a basis of composition should be thoroughly digested. Incidentally, the suggestion that the last movement of the Jupiter is contrapuntally a very elementary exercise would be dismissed by any musician as preposterous; though the comparison of the principles of Palestrinian, Bachian and Mozartian counterpoint (to be included I hope in my series of articles) is very illuminating.

By historical perspective I meant something much more purely

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musical than Ford and Reiss appear to imagine. I meant primarily the training of sensibility which will enable one to perform music according to the criteria appropriate to it—not to play Bach as though he were Chopin, to take a very crude example, or Lully as though he were Purcell.[2] It amounts to a training in the essentials of musical tradition, seeing where things fit in, acquiring the sense of style (mainly of course a matter of phrasing). No doubt ideally this would involve some reference back to the historical environment of the composer in question; but that was not mainly what I had in mind. I have glanced through my musical academy article again, and I don't think the case I made out was really misleading. Ford's and Reiss's attempts to show up my historical incompetence are therefore not really relevant, but even at that they seem to me the most unconvincing part of their case. Have they never heard of the notion that an artist reflects, subconsciously no doubt, the ideas of his epoch? Berlioz lived through a revolutionary age; if listening to the *Requiem* or the *Trojans* doesn't convince people of the immense revolutionary ardour that animated Berlioz and of the bitterness of his repeated disillusionment perhaps the more obvious method of a perusal of his letters will; a parade of dates would lend emphasis to rather than explode this case, were there space to list them. The example of my lack of historical sense from the sixteenth century is so fatuous that I can hardly believe it was intended seriously, unless as a deliberate attempt to discredit me. That Palestrina, Byrd, Vittoria and Lasso, all figures at once local and European, centred their work in the Church and could only do so because they lived in what one is rather embarrassed to call in these pages an 'organic community' is surely none the less true for being a truism,[3] and if Ford and Reiss don't know what the phrase 'the sixteenth-century idiom' means, it's high time they found out from Morris's book. It was the great strength of the sixteenth century that there were certain fundamental laws of composition which obtained all over Europe and which, because (I still maintain) they were deduced from the natural potentialities of the human voice, allowed for the utmost liberty and variety of personal expression. No doubt any detailed consideration of these composers would take into account the historical phenomena my critics refer to. Even so the collations would have to be relevant—and what had Vittoria and Cortéz in common except that they both sincerely believed they worked for the greater glory of God? (and one of them was right). I would stoutly maintain that my 'generalization' is neither vague nor inaccurate and I cannot believe any musician could take exception to it. Having done some fairly detailed work on the conditions in which Byrd and Vittoria composed I shall be able to demonstrate this further in my article on

[2]The relation between the English Purcell (with his roots in the Elizabethans) and the French (Lullian) influence at the court of Charles II, is a very interesting subject for study.

[3]Byrd, a devout Catholic in a time of religious dissension, found no difficulty in writing for both the Catholic and Protestant Church.

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sixteenth-century technique. Incidentally, Ford's and Reiss's attempt at historical criticism would meet with the most ribald response from any historian. There was plenty of 'glory' and intoxication in the Second Empire (Maximilian of Mexico, etc.) and a man of Berlioz's sensitiveness and intelligence would undoubtedly have both been victimized by, and have seen through (hence the disillusionment) the pretensions of Napoleon *le petit* (compared with *le grand*). Perhaps it's because I'm talking about social history (whereas Ford and Reiss in so far as they've any clear idea in their heads seem to be talking about political history), that I fail to see that Galileo, Cellini, Mexico or the Inquisition had any influence on the sixteenth-century domestic milieu, while the suggestion that the long and painful process of the decay of feudalism had any immediate influence on the conditions in which sixteenth-century composers worked is ludicrously unhistorical. As for Luther, the Church and the homogeneous domestic milieu were the basis of his creed.

I do not regard my Fauré essay as a very high-class bit of writing and would certainly express it in different terms now. At the same time the main points are surely clear enough, and my critics' interpretation of them wilfully perverse. I use the word civilization in two ways: first the sense in which we talk about the civilization or culture of Shakespeare's England, and I point out that there aren't to-day many artists directly fostered by a cultural group—as was Byrd or Dowland (Sibelius was perhaps partially so); the other sense in which I use the word civilization is on a higher plane more or less synonymous with what we mean by 'cultivated' and doesn't necessarily entail any social group behind it. For instance, in Roussel's case it amounts to an awareness of the artistic and cultural traditions of his country; in van Dieren's or Busoni's case to an awareness of the wider traditions of Europe. I don't think there's anything vague about this, or if there is, it's a vagueness not peculiar to me among *Scrutiny* writers, for I remember that Mrs. Leavis once spoke of Santayana as a figure of Latin and Mediterranean culture in almost exactly the same way as I used that description of Fauré. When I said Fauré created an ideal civilization, I meant precisely what I said; the civilization is there in the music but it was certainly not present in the society of which Fauré was a part—as was the civilization of Byrd or Palestrina. The natural implication of saying that the germ of Fauré's civilization is in the early songs is that these songs are not merely the elegant trifles they appear to be —a case borne out by most competent authorities—not that the civilization itself is suspect. Since I explicitly state that the whole of the technical part of the essay is devoted to an analysis of the idiom of the 'adult organism' Ford's and Reiss's claim that 'the adult organism is not described' is a simple misstatement of fact which destroys their whole case. Whatever gaffs I make through ignorance of the latest artistic fashions don't alter my case about Fauré's *music*, which is stated clearly enough in the technical part of the essay; and I cannot see that my critics say anything more

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than that they happen not to approve of this particular moral judgment. I am willing strongly to deplore the waffly final section of my essay, but the technical comparison of aspects of Fauré's idiom with Bach and Monteverde still seems to me to be important and the musical significance of it is not once referred to by Ford and Reiss. They content themselves with Stebbingizing the admittedly rather irrelevant final section, and with a completely dogmatic assertion, without any demonstration, that to them Fauré's music seems bloodless, emaciated and dry, 'a typical consummation of French intellect.' After this prize chestnut I wonder they've the face to accuse me or anyone of making vague generalizations; and I wouldn't make the 'moral judgment' they expect of me for the simple reason that I believe it's immoral because untrue. While I don't regard the Fauré essay very highly I feel justified in remarking that I received, *à propos* of it, more encouraging letters than I did *à propos* of any other piece of writing—one from a distinguished French musician, many from *Scrutiny* readers who wrote that the discovery of Fauré's music, and, in particular, the *Requiem*, had proved to them their most moving musical experience in years. (And Edmund Rubbra, whom one would not suspect of any temperamental affinity with Fauré, remarked to me only the other day that the more he listened to the records of the *Requiem*, the more he marvelled at its intensity and inner fire). At most the case seems to come down to my moral judgment against theirs (with some little backing for mine in the technical part of the essay); to their opinion they are welcome: but I don't feel moved to modify mine. As for the supposed arid intellectuality of French music—consider the soaring line of Perotin, the sensuous delicacy of Costeley, the tragic passion of Couperin, the fire of Berlioz, even the poignancy of the courtly Lully; I think it was a myth fostered by the Teutonically trained.

Lastly the positive suggestions. Most of them will, I think, be covered in the present series of articles on musical tradition (though I think the elementary definitions should be looked up in the appropriate musical text-books). An investigation of the emotive properties of the raw material of music has been very adequately done by Hindemith in his theoretical work (an American translation used to be obtainable); but I don't think it's definitive because the emotive significance of chords and devices varies so much according to context, and a major seventh in one register and placing may have an entirely different emotional connotation from what it would in another. The only really adequate approach is continual analysis of the texture of music with the score in front of one; in the scope of an essay without even music-type quotations and without a musically-trained audience anything even approaching this ideal—the only way of demonstrating how music works—is patently impractical. Consideration of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven will, as I remarked earlier, eventually appear in the musical tradition articles (I do not think the first movement of Bach's D minor concerto is among his most significant works nor that it is without melody and

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invention, but of that more anon).

In conclusion, to give some deeper point to these random and I hope not too resentful comments, I would like to refer again to this general question of musical education. What I am aiming to do is to evolve a conception of European musical tradition (I hope one day it'll get published in two books, one on contemporary music, one on the traditions of the past) into which one will be able to fit one's attitude to Bach, Mozart and Beethoven; not to define an attitude to these great composers on to which one can often quite irrelevantly hang everything else. I am convinced that this notion of the *totality* of the European tradition is of the utmost importance if we are ever to have again a musically-educated public; and this is the first step towards a more healthy relation between the composer and his public than inevitably obtains at present. This is why I think the job of the musical educator is potentially so important, not only (indeed, not so much) in highbrow places like this, as among the sort of people who come to music classes in adult education. I once met a man in very highbrow circles who told me that Mozart was a pretty enough composer but you had to go to Tchaikowsky's symphonies for real tragedy. If surprising in those circles, I suppose that's the very general attitude among 'the people,' and certainly the people are as hazy as my critics hinted I was about the distinctions between Mozart's significant and relatively insignificant work. Yet what surprises me, after three or four years of this kind of work, is the rapidity with which people will learn, given the opportunity—how soon not only Mozart, but Bach and Byrd will put Tchaikowsky in perspective (no need as yet to rout him). Last Sunday I played suites by Kuhnau, Mathesson, Muffat and other to a class, alongside suites of Bach, not as historical curiosities but as complementary manifestations of the human spirit, a course as illuminating as the response was encouraging. I would like humbly to suggest that Mr. Ford (since I know he plays the piano), makes this comparison too, and I believe he will acquire then an insight into the nature of musical education deeper than he could by reading me or anyone. In *Scrutiny* I'm doing on a higher level the same kind of thing as I do in adult classes, and I believe that a lot of people working all over the country along these lines (I hope it doesn't sound immodest if I add that they mightn't be easy to find) could in time help to produce a more organic relation between composer and the people (of course they couldn't do it alone). It'll take a long time and certainly won't happen in my lifetime. But the hope gives a kind of dignity to one's calling and makes, I trust, enthusiasm not as suspect as it would be in an elaborately organized critical method. I don't doubt the method will come eventually; in the meantime the last thing I'm ashamed of is my enthusiasm.

W. H. MELLERS.

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BENJAMIN CONSTANT AND 'ADOLPHE'

'Je ne veux rien voir fleurir près de moi. Je veux que tout ce qui m'environne soit triste, languissant, fané . . .'

Letter to Madame de Charrière, 21st March, 1788.

FEW great writers have left less flattering portraits of themselves than Benjamin Constant in his solitary novel. *Adolphe* is a masterpiece, but it possesses in a pre-eminent degree that peculiar unpleasantness which is sometimes said to be characteristic of nearly all great art, and most of those who have studied it at all attentively must recall occasions when, overcome by a physical malaise, they have had to lay the book aside, unable to continue their reading.

This feeling, which only disappears with long familiarity, is not confined to modern readers. The audiences of friends to whom Constant used to read his novel aloud in the ten years which passed between its composition in 1806 and its publication in 1816 were 'revolted' by the character of the hero. The persistence of this feeling cannot be disregarded by the critic and the reasons for it are not difficult to discover. In this book, the novelist, using the immense powers of analysis which he had inherited from a great tradition, gives a remorseless catalogue of his own failings. One may feel a secret envy for the vitality of Racine's characters, for the ferocity with which male and female rend one another and which speaks directly to primitive feelings that lie buried beneath layers of civilization in all of us. One feels nothing of the sort for the hesitations and vacillations of Adolphe which inflict appalling suffering on one unhappy woman. Yet honesty compels us to recognise that his findings are not less universal than Racine's. He makes articulate feelings which, potentially at any rate, are common to us all, but which we instinctively prefer to keep hidden. His revelations have nothing to do with the comfortably vague *mal du siècle* of the next generation; they are not blunted by that soothing mixture of sentiment and showmanship which made Rousseau so attractive to his contemporaries, and they are completely free from the melodramatic element which tainted the work of some of the greatest of the nineteenth-century masters. They are presented with a nakedness which shatters complacency. Far from trying to excuse himself, Constant's hero sedulously pushes his virtues into the background and is at pains to underline and condemn his weaknesses.

Paul Bourget has spoken of 'cette coexistence dans une même âme, de la lucidité de l'esprit la plus inefficace et du pire désordre sensuel ou sentimental.'[1] It is difficult to understand or to forgive

[1] *Oeuvres complètes I Critique Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, Paris, 1899, p. 21.

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a man who is clearly endowed with immense intellectual gifts and who makes such ill use of them. The word 'forgive' illustrates the peculiar relationship between the reader and the book, and the intensity of the experience. For there is a world of difference between the faintly remote princes and princesses of seventeenth-century tragedy and this man who seems at times to be altogether too close to us, as though his creator had succeeded too well in the work of self-exposure. We seem to see the speaker bearing down on us, singling us out in a room full of people. He catches us by the lapel of the coat, peers at us with his weak eyes and begins to tell us the latest news of his relations with Mme de Staël or his senile affair with Mme Récamier. 'Cette furie qui me poursuit l'écume à la bouche et le poignard à la main,' he cries of Mme de Staël. 'Je suis las de *l'homme femme*'—he plucks at our coat for emphasis—'dont la main de fer m'enchaîne depuis dix ans. . . .' And so the appalling stream continues.

We can only fully appreciate *Adolphe* when we know what manner of man the author was and something of the age in which he lived. Constant was not a dilettante, a man of letters who frittered away his life in drawing-rooms and happened almost by accident to write a great novel. He was not merely a gambler and duellist, the lover of Mme de Staël and the unsuccessful suitor to whom Mme Récamier refused what are politely termed *les dernières faveurs*. He was one of the most brilliant intellects of his time, a considerable scholar, an original thinker and a distinguished and ultimately successful libéral politician. He was a pioneer in the study of comparative religion and though his great book on religion, which took forty years to write, has long since been superseded, it can still tell us a good deal about the intellectual climate of the age. His political writings were among the ablest produced in his time and the best of them—the attacks on despotism and the pages on militarism in *De l'esprit de conquête et de l'usurpation*—so far from losing their freshness, read like a description of contemporary Europe.

Constant was born in 1767 and died in 1830. His life thus covers one of the most troubled and fateful periods of modern European history. It is a period which bears a striking resemblance to our own with its wars and revolutions, its perplexity and its instability. Constant's wide interests and insatiable curiosity brought him into close contact with the life of his time and his weaknesses made him a victim of its spiritual and intellectual upheavals. 'Adolphe,' said the author of the first Russian translation of the novel in words which can be applied to Constant himself, 'Adolphe n'est ni Français, ni Allemand, ni Anglais, c'est l'élève de son siècle.' He was in the fullest sense a child of his age and he was perfectly endowed by mind, temper and his cosmopolitan upbringing to interpret it to a later generation.[2]

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[2]The essential documents are: *Journal intime*, ed. Melegari (Paris, 1895); the autobiographical fragment, *Le cahier rouge* (Paris, 1907); *Lettres de Benjamin Constant à sa famille*, ed. J.-H. Menos (Paris,

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II.

Adolphe is a great novel for three reasons. It is a searching criticism of a section of European society at a crucial moment in its history. It makes articulate the spiritual unrest of the most sensitive and intelligent members of that society. Finally, it explores a problem which belongs peculiarly to our own time with an insight and a technical originality that make it a landmark in the history of the novel.

The theme possesses at once the simplicity and the complexity of a seventeenth-century tragedy. A young man of twenty-two has just completed his studies with some distinction at the University of Göttingen. His father is the minister of one of the German Electors and intends his son to follow in his footsteps; but he feels that before settling down the son should see something of the world and the problems with which he will have to deal. Adolphe arrives at a little German principality to spend a few months at the Court and to continue his studies. Soon after his arrival he becomes entangled with the mistress of a certain Comte de P——, a Polish woman who is ten years older than he and the mother of the Count's two illegitimate children. Adolphe is not in love with Ellénore, never has been, is indeed incapable of loving anyone. He drifts into the liaison with Ellénore out of boredom and loneliness and a desperate need to fill the void which he feels within himself. But though his illusions about his feelings for Ellénore soon vanish, he cannot make up his mind to leave her. He postpones his return home for six months. There is a breach between Ellénore and the Count and to Adolphe's dismay she follows him to his native town. He discovers that his father is on the point of ordering her expulsion, and out of generosity and a mistaken sense of chivalry he runs away with her first to Bohemia, then to Warsaw, where she has inherited her father's estates. The bond becomes more and more wearisome, but he still hesitates to break it. The friction between them grows until finally Ellénore discovers that Adolphe, under pressure from a friend of his father's who is minister at Warsaw, is plotting to leave her and dies a broken woman.

Constant drew heavily on his personal experience for his materials. He was not content with making Adolphe a portrait of the artist. Family, friends and mistresses were all grist to his mill. The portraits of his father and Mme de Charrière are barely disguised. Ellénore is a composite character. Mme de Staël, Mrs. Trevor, Anna Lindsay and Julie Talma all played their part in her creation. And Adolphe uses practically the same words to describe his life at D . . . that his creator had used twenty years earlier in the letters to Mme de Charrière describing his adventures at the Court of the Duke of Brunswick.

Critics have complained that some of his characters are unconvincing and that others are faintly drawn.[3] These criticisms

1888). Gustave Rudler's great study, *La jeunesse de Benjamin Constant*, 1767–1794 (Paris, 1909) is indispensable and contains a large number of letters which have not been published elsewhere.

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seem to me to be caused by a failure to grasp the novelist's purpose, by an unconscious comparison between the presentation of his material in the novel and its presentation in the diaries and letters. It is true that *Adolphe* is an 'autobiographical novel,' but it is autobiographical in a very unusual way. Life and art are so closely interwoven that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the novel followed life or whether life followed the novel, for some of the events of Constant's later life read like a repetition of scenes from *Adolphe*.[4] An autobiographical novel is not the same as an autobiography and *Adolphe* must not be judged as though it is. It must be judged as a work of art. Our experience in reading it differs profoundly from our experience in reading the *Journal intime* or the *Cahier rouge*. The artist selects and rearranges his everyday experience until it is transformed into a fresh pattern. This pattern is the novel. His characters are in no sense 'contemporary portraits'; they are imaginative creations which possess precisely as much or as little life as is necessary for his purpose. Each one of them represents a particular strand in the final pattern and becomes the vehicle for the novelist's criticism of a concrete situation.

These virtues can only be illustrated by a detailed examination of the text:

> 'Je venais de finir à vingt-deux ans mes études à l'université de Göttingue.—L'intention de mon père, ministre de l'Electeur de . . . , était que je parcourusse les pays les plus remarquables de l'Europe. Il voulait ensuite m'appeler auprès de lui, me faire entrer dans le département dont la direction lui était confiée, et me préparer à le remplacer un jour. J'avais obtenu, par un travail assez opiniâtre, au milieu d'une vie très-dissipée, des succès qui m'avaient distingué de mes compagnons d'étude, et qui avaient fait concevoir à mon père sur moi des espérances probablement fort exagérées.'[5]

Göttingen carries us back to the Germany of the Romantic Movement, the Germany of a hundred tiny principalities and the easy-going student life with its indulgences and its *folies*. This life is contrasted with the dullness and respectability of the measured life of the bureaucrat. There is an ominous inflection about the word *intention*. The dream begins to fade; the life of dissipation must be put behind one; unruly desires must be curbed and forced into the mould of conventional respectability, into the uniform life of the 'department,' the position of 'trust.' The ironical *espérances probablement fort exagérées* marks the beginning of a conflict not merely between two different temperaments, but between two

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[3]Faguet is the chief culprit. V. *Politiques et moralistes du dix-neuvième siècle*, I ère série, Paris, 4th ed., 1894, pp. 203–7.

[4]It is not possible to speak with certainty on this point as the novel is believed to have undergone considerable revision between 1806 and 1816. V. Rudler's Introduction to his critical edition (Manchester University Press, 1919).

[5]I have used Rudler's text, which retains contemporary spelling, throughout. All italics in the quotations which follow are mine.

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different ways of life. This becomes apparent in the third paragraph:

> 'Je ne demandais alors qu'à me livrer à ces impressions primitives et fougueuses qui jettent l'âme hors de la sphère commune, et lui inspirent le dédain de tous les objets qui l'environnent. Je trouvais dans mon père, non pas un censeur, mais un observateur froid et caustique, qui souriait d'abord de pitié, et qui finissait bientôt la conversation avec impatience.'

The words, *les pays les plus remarquables*, in the first paragraph are intentionally conventional. One may well visit all the European countries in a spirit of correct admiration and even sow one's wild oats before settling down to become an excellent administrator. It is far otherwise with the *impressions primitives et fougueuses*. For here the conflict between the rebellious individual and social convention is radical and dangerous. We can see already that the father is more than a personal portrait, is the symbol of certain accepted values. It is his voice that we shall hear at Caden and at Warsaw reminding his son of his abilities and begging him not to fritter away his life by sacrificing it to *impressions primitives et fougueuses*.

Although the father is a symbol of certain standards, these standards do not command unqualified respect:

> 'J'avais dans la maison de mon père adopté sur les femmes un système assez immoral. Mon père, bien qu'il observât strictement les convenances extérieures, se permettait assez fréquemment des propos légers sur les liaisons d'amour. Il les regardait comme des amusemens, sinon permis, du moins excusables, et considérait le mariage seul sous un rapport sérieux. Il avait pour principe, qu'un jeune homme doit éviter avec soin de faire ce qu'on nomme une folie, c'est-à-dire, de contracter un engagement durable, avec une personne qui ne fût pas parfaitement son égale pour la fortune, la naissance et les avantages extérieurs. Mais du reste, toutes les femmes, aussi long-temps qu'il ne s'agissait pas de les épouser, lui paraissaient pouvoir, sans inconvéniens, être prises, puis être quittées: et je l'avais vu sourire avec une sorte d'approbation à cette parodie d'un mot connu: Cela leur fait si peu de mal, et à nous tant de plaisir.'

These are the views of the eighteenth-century libertine with their shallow respect for *les convenances extérieures*, and their emphasis on *fortune*, *naissance* and *avantages extérieurs*, the values of a society which had lost its moral fibre or, as Constant himself put it, 'd'une société toute factice, qui supplée aux principes par les règles et aux émotions par les convenances, et qui hait le scandale comme importun, non comme immoral, car elle accueille assez bien le vice quand le scandale ne s'y trouve pas.[6]

Constant was too great a writer to be the dupe of such a society and he goes on to point out that the expression of these opinions by parents has a disastrous effect on the moral education of their children:

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[6]Preface to the Third Edition. V. Rudler, p. (xv).

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'Ces règles [he says of the principles which are undermined] ne sont plus à leurs yeux que des formules banales que leurs parents sont convenus de leur répéter pour l'acquit de leur conscience, et les plaisanteries leur semblent renfermer le véritable secret de la vie.'

It must always be remembered that the Constants came of old Calvinist stock, but the convictions which had once driven them into exile had first weakened, then turned into a revolt against traditional morality. Juste Constant's own life was far from blameless and in spite of his insistence on the *convenances extérieures* its laxity had had a decisive influence on his son's character. Now the puritan conscience is ineradicable and it may well remain intact without exercising any practical influence on conduct. This is one of the clues to the tragedy of Adolphe and one of the secrets of Constant's greatness as a novelist. In the novelist the puritan conscience was transformed into that sovereign honesty which stamps a man as a great writer. The phrases, 'Je ne veux point ici me justifier,' 'Certes, je ne veux point m'excuser,' 'En relevant ainsi les défauts d'Ellénore, c'est moi que j'accuse et que je condamne,' which occur so frequently in *Adolphe*, are not vain moralising; they are a sign of the writer's consciousness of his responsibility and of the sureness of his apprehension of moral values which give his work its weight and place it in a different class from the productions of the other novelists of the Romantic period.[7]

The other decisive influence in Adolphe's life is the (anonymous) Mme de Charrière.

'J'avais à l'âge de dix-sept ans vu mourir une femme âgée, dont l'esprit, d'une tournure remarquable et bizarre, avait commencé à développer le mien.[8] Cette femme, comme tant d'autres, s'était, à l'entrée de sa carrière, lancée vers le monde qu'elle ne connaissait pas, avec le sentiment d'une grande force d'âme et de facultés vraiment puissantes. Comme tant d'autres aussi, faute de s'etre pliée à des convenances factices, mais nécessaires, elle avait vu ses espérances trompées, sa jeunesse passer sans plaisir, et la vieillesse enfin l'avait atteinte sans la soumettre. Elle vivait dans un château voisin d'une de nos terres, mécontente et retirée, n'ayant que son esprit pour ressource, et analysant tout avec son esprit. Pendant près d'un an, dans

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[7]Compare, for example, Goethe's view as reported in the *Journal intime*: 'Souper très intéressant chez Goethe. C'est un homme plein d'esprit, de saillies, de profondeur, d'idées neuves. Mais c'est le moins bonhomme que je connaisse. En parlant de *Werther* il disait: "Ce qui rend cet ouvrage dangereux, c'est d'avoir peint de la faiblesse comme de la force. Mais quand je fais une chose qui me convient, les conséquences ne me regardent pas. S'il y a des fous, à qui la lecture en tourne mal, ma foi tant pis!" ' (*Melegari, op. cit.*, p. 9.)

[8]This is an example of the way in which Constant modified his facts. Mme de Charrière died in 1805 when he was thirty-eight years old.

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nos conversations inépuisables, nous avions envisagé la vie sous toutes ses faces et la mort toujours pour terme de tout. Et après avoir tant causé de la mort avec elle, j'avais vu la mort la frapper à mes yeux. . . .

'Cet événement m'avait rempli d'un sentiment d'incertitude sur la destinée, et d'une rêverie vague qui ne m'abandonnait pas. Je lisais de préférence dans les poètes ce qui rappelait la brièveté de la vie humaine. Je trouvais qu'aucun but ne valait la peine d'aucun effort. . . .'

A comparison between this passage and the description of Mme de Charrière in the *Cahier rouge*—too long to set out here—illustrates very well the difference between the methods of the novelist and the autobiographer. The passage from the *Cahier rouge* does not possess the *finality* of the passage from *Adolphe*. The writer confines himself to a particular incident—the escapade in England—which has no general significance. The portrait in *Adolphe* 'places' Mme de Charrière. She is here clearly 'the eighteenth century in person' for the hero.[9] It is not merely that every word contributes something essential to her character, but that every trait assumes a larger significance and is essential to the novel. She encourages his revolt against the *convenances*, teaches him to rely only on his intellect and to analyse everything with it, until finally his belief in life is profoundly undermined. He perceives the dangers of this teaching, but it does not prevent him him from adopting her habits of mind or from being deeply infected with her scepticism. He recognises that the *convenances* though *factices* are 'necessary' and that disregard of them leads to frustration and disappointment. For excessive analysis without positive belief must work destructively and it was precisely positive belief that was singularly lacking in Mme de Charrière and her protégé.

It can now be seen that the characters divide into two groups—those who conform to accepted standards as Adolphe's father and the Baron de T . . . . ('vieux diplomate dont l'âme était usée') conform, and those who like Adolphe, Ellénore and Mme de Charrière revolt against them. The rebels are people with great gifts but unstable characters who could only have turned their gifts to good account in an ordered society.

The connection between the individual and society is a close one and is implied in every action, in every word that he speaks:

'Je me rendis, en quittant Göttingue, dans la petite ville de D . . . . Cette ville était la résidence d'un Prince, qui, comme la plupart de ceux de l'Allemagne, gouvernait avec douceur un pays de peu d'étendue, protégeait les hommes éclairés qui venaient s'y fixer, laissant à toutes les opinions une liberté parfaite, mais qui, borné par l'ancien usage à la société de ses courtisans, ne rassemblait par là même autour de lui que des hommes en grande partie insignifiants ou médiocres.'

The description of D . . . evokes again the Germany of the Romantic Movement, the liberal princes who protect enlightened

[9]Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits littéraires*, III, p. 275.

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men and guarantee freedom of opinion. Their excellent intentions, however, are frustrated by convention and they end by surrounding themselves with people who are for the most part 'insignifiants ou médiocres.' The word *médiocre(s)* is the basis of Constant's criticism of society. It is placed intentionally at the end of the passage—marking the decline from *éclairés*—and it occurs in other places where it is given the same force:

> 'Les maris étaient dépourvus de sentimens aussi bien que d'idées; les femmes ne différaient de leurs maris que par une *médiocrité* plus inquiète et plus agitée, parce qu'elles n'avaient pas, comme eux, cette tranquillité d'esprit qui résulte de l'occupation et de la régularité des affaires.'

The picture of the factions, jealousies and dubious morality, which are characteristic of a highly sophisticated society, emerges with striking clarity from his account of D . . . . It is a picture of intellectual and emotional bankruptcy. The women are vain, empty, restless; the men are potentially no better, but the external discipline imposed by *la régularité des affaires* provides a slender barrier against open anarchy.

In other places the criticism becomes specifically moral:

> 'J'avais contracté, dans mes conversations avec la femme qui la première avait développé mes idées, une insurmontable aversion pour toutes les maximes communes et pour toutes les formules dogmatiques. Lors donc j'entendais la *médiocrité* disserter avec complaisance sur des principes bien établis, bien incontestables en fait de morale, de convenance ou de religion, *choses qu'elle met assez volontiers sur la même ligne*, je me sentais poussé à la contredire; non que j'eusse adopté des opinions opposées, mais parce que j'étais impatienté d'une conviction si ferme et si lourde.'
>
> 'J'ai toujours ignoré comment s'était formée une liaison [between the Count and Ellénore] qui, lorsque j'ai vu pour la première fois Ellénore, était, dès longtemps, établie et pour ainsi dire *consacrée*.'

The words that I have underlined in the first of these two passages emphasise the complete confusion of values which existed in society and the hollowness of the conventions. The word *consacrée* in the second passage provides the appropriate comment on a society in which a liaison, however irregular, only needs to last a certain time to take on something of the sanctity of marriage.

On the next page he proceeds to give an interesting defence of the irritation that society arouses in him:

> 'L'étonnement de la première jeunesse, à l'aspect d'une société si factice et si travaillée, annonce plutôt un coeur naturel qu'un esprit méchant. Cette société d'ailleurs n'a rien à en craindre: elle pèse tellement sur nous, son influence sourde est tellement puissante, qu'elle ne tarde pas à nous façonner d'après le moule universel. Nous ne sommes plus surpris alors que de notre ancienne surprise, et nous nous trouvons bien sous notre nouvelle forme, comme l'on finit par respirer librement dans un spectacle encombré par la foule, tandis qu'en entrant, on n'y respirait qu'avec effort.'

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The contrast between the *coeur naturel* and the *société si factice et si travaillée* points to the dilemma of the sensitive person in a corrupt society. Revolt against the *convenances* leads to waste and disorder, but acceptance leads to the blunting of one's finer faculties and the impoverishment of one's emotional life. The homely image of a person becoming accustomed to the stale air in a room expresses very well both the degradation of the process of levelling down and the hopelessness of resistance.

In such passages Constant appears as the champion of civilisation and the natural order. He is the intellectual aristocrat, the remorseless critic of a sham nobility. The fate of the natural human being in an unnatural society is one of the central themes of *Adolphe*. Constant, like all great writers, sets his personal stamp on certain words which recur again and again. *Accoutumer* is one of them. For the characters become habituated to a certain kind of society, to a certain round of feelings and to certain knowledge about themselves, and this warps and corrodes their natural qualities. In a striking sentence he observes:

> 'Ce n'est pas le plaisir, ce n'est pas la nature, ce ne sont pas les sens qui sont corrupteurs; ce sont les *calculs* auxquels la société nous *accoutume*, et les réflexions que l'expérience fait naître.'

Among his other favourite words are *travestir*, *dénaturer*, *calculs*, *flétrir*, *déchirer*, *briser*, *factice*, *faiblesse*—

> 'La *justesse* de son esprit était *dénaturée* par l'emportement de son caractère.'

All these words suggest their opposites. They point to standards which are not observed, principles which are transgressed, an order which is disintegrating from within.

III.

The originality of Constant's experience is inseparable from the originality of his method, and there is a sentence in Chapter II which throws a good deal of light on both:

> 'Presque toujours pour vivre en repos avec nous-mêmes, nous travestissons en calculs et en systèmes nos impuissances ou nos faiblesses. *Cela satisfait cette portion de nous, qui est, pour ainsi dire, spectatrice de l'autre.*'

There are a number of ways in which Constant's art reminds us of that of the seventeenth-century masters, but the analysis of emotion is not one of them. There is properly speaking no such thing as analysis in a poet like Racine or a novelist like Mme de La Fayette. There is instead intuition, the sudden spontaneous insight of the characters into the hidden places of the mind which disrupts personality. Thus we are told of the Prince de Clèves:

> 'Il ne trouvait de tous côtés que des précipices et des abîmes.'

It is not until the end of the eighteenth century that the artist (as distinct from the moralist or the diarist) deliberately sits back, takes his feelings to pieces, explains their causes and passes judgment upon them. The words 'cette portion de nous, qui est, pour ainsi dire, spectatrice de l'autre' show to what lengths the

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ravages of self-consciousness had gone. The result may appear to be the same, but the way in which it is produced is not. 'J'ai voulu peindre dans *Adolphe*,' said Constant in the Preface to the second edition, 'une des principales maladies morales de notre siècle, cette fatigue, cette incertitude, cette absence de force, cette analyse perpétuelle, qui place une arrière-pensée à côté de tous les sentimens, et qui par là les corrompt dès leur naissance.'[10] Racine's characters are destroyed by a violent conflict, those of the nineteenth-century novelists by a process of gradual corrosion, a paralysis which spreads over their minds and feelings and reduces them to complete impotence. Constant uses an ingenious adaption of the method of Racine to present a nineteenth-century situation. The events described in *Adolphe* extend over four years, but by deliberately telescoping time, by compressing his story into a *récit* of less than a hundred pages, Constant achieves the intense concentration of emotion, the same density that we find in Racine instead of the slow diffusion of emotion that we find in *l'Education sentimentale*. It is this which makes his experience so overwhelming and sometimes so revolting.

The difficulties and dangers of this method are immense. It needs intellectual integrity and clear-sightedness amounting to genius. For one of the principal dangers is that the mind, speculating about its own processes in retrospect, will end by distorting and falsifying the *données*. It is the temptation to which Rousseau succumbed. The other great danger is that the novel will cease to be a work of art at all and will degenerate into a psychologist's case book. This, it seems to me, is what happens in the later volumes of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and in *Les hommes de bonne volonté*.

Constant succeeded brilliantly where most of his successors failed. When we compare the opening of the *Confessions* with some of Adolphe's comments on his own experience, we have a very good idea of the quality of Constant's mind:

> 'Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et qui n'aura point d'imitateur. Je vais montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature et cet homme sera moi. Je me suis montré tel que je suis; méprisable et vil quand je l'ai été, bon, généreux, sublime, quand je l'ai été: j'ai dévoilé mon intérieur, tel que tu l'as vu toi-même, Etre éternel.'

The theatrical tone is at once suspect and Rivière has pointed out that the adjectives *bon, généreux, sublime, vil, méprisable* actually prevent us from perceiving the feelings themselves; we see only Rousseau's interpretation of them. Constant's tone is very different:

> 'L'amour, qu'une heure auparavant je m'applaudissais de feindre, je *crus* tout-à-coup l'éprouver avec fureur.'
>
> 'Je me sentais, *de la meilleure foi du monde*, véritablement amoureux.'
>
> 'Offerte à mes regards dans un moment *où mon coeur avait*

[10] *Adolphe*, ed. Rudler, p. [xi].

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besoin d'amour, ma vanité de succès, Ellénore me parut une conquête digne de moi.'

'*Adolphe*,' wrote Guy de Pourtalès, 'apportait la preuve que la partie la plus sérieuse et la plus riche de l'homme est intimement mêlée en lui à ses duperies et à sa littérature.'[11] Constant's attitude is one of extreme circumspection. He is determined to separate illusion from reality, false feelings from true, the feelings themselves from the interpretation which the mind automatically places on them to protect itself. It is not simply that he possessed that *vue directe*—that luminous glance—into the complexity of the human heart which Rivière declared to be singularly lacking in Flaubert: it is that we perceive the feeling and the moral judgment as separate and distinct. We do more than that. We perceive the simultaneous existence of different levels of feeling, the *partie la plus riche de l'homme* and his *duperies*, 'the need of his heart for love and of his vanity for success.' The *impuissances* and *faiblesses* are never converted into *calculs* and *systèmes*.

When this method is turned on Adolphe the results are impressive. He is not merely the pivot of the book; he is, strictly speaking, the only character in the book. Everything is rigorously subordinated to a single aim—to illuminate the deepest and unexplored places of his personality. In reading *Adolphe* I am sometimes reminded of an X-ray photograph, but an X-ray photograph in which one sees the blood flowing and the nerves throbbing. There are four main factors in his make-up: an intense vitality, an extreme shyness derived from his father, a deep-seated pessimism and, most important of all, what he calls *un besoin de sensibilité*:

> 'Ma contrainte avec lui [he says of his father] eut une grande influence sur mon caractère. Aussi timide que lui, mais plus agité, parce que j'étais plus jeune, je m'accoutumai à renfermer en moi-même tout ce que j'éprouvais, à ne former que des plans solitaires, à ne compter que sur moi pour leur exécution, à considérer les avis, l'intérêt, l'assistance et jusqu'à la seule présence des autres comme une gêne et comme un obstacle.'

It must be recognized that the *impressions primitives et fougueuses* already referred to are the sign of a genuine vitality, but this vitality made intellectual discipline and direction essential, and it is here that intellect failed. The absence of discipline and direction meant that shyness and artificial social convention acted as a dam which inhibited the proper functioning of nervous energy. As a result, Adolphe's feelings are constantly wasting themselves in useless eruptions. 'Mon esprit,' he said, 'm'entraînais au delà de toute mesure.' The reaction against this waste produced a no less dangerous lassitude which in turn undermined his vitality:

> 'Je n'avais pas cependant la profondeur d'égoïsme qu'un tel caractère paraît annoncer. Tout en ne m'intéressant qu'à moi, je m'intéressais faiblement à moi-même. Je portais au fond de mon coeur un besoin de sensibilité dont je ne m'apercevais pas; mais qui, ne trouvant point à se satisfaire, me détachait

[11] *De Hamlet à Swann*, Paris, 1924, p. 177.

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successivement de tous les objets qui tour-à-tour attiraient ma curiosité.'

'Constant,' said Rudler in his great study, 'arrive en même temps . . . au dernier degré de la langueur vitale et de la lucidité intellectuelle.'[12] The weaknesses which are analysed with such skill in this passage are as different from the moral debility of the heroes of Chateaubriand and Musset as the method of Constant is from their wordy productions. The statement that Adolphe only took a feeble interest in himself points to a profound despair which paralyses *action*, but not *thought*. A large part of the book is devoted to the elucidation and analysis of this *besoin de sensibilité* which was undreamed of in the psychology of the seventeenth-century writers and which bears no relation to the *froideur* and the *indifférence* that their characters display towards one another. What is disconcerting about Adolphe is that he is at once almost unbearably sensitive and insensible to the point of brutality, that he possesses great reserves of emotion but gives the impression of complete aridity. While it is true that his life is continually disrupted by gusts of violent feelings, these feelings are indeterminate and unattached. The intellect is incapable of directing them towards any useful end and they can never be *adequate* substitutes—I emphasise the word for reasons which will be apparent later—for other feelings that he does not possess. For the clue to the contradictions of Adolphe's character lies in the fact that he did not possess certain feelings which a normal person must be expected to possess. He is perpetually trying to create the missing feelings, to convince himself that he does possess them, that he is reacting normally to a particular situation. The strain gives the first part of the novel its restless, destructive movement—a movement which is reflected in phrases to which Constant has given a peculiar resonance: 'La fatigue d'une agitation sans but,' 'Je me débattais intérieurement' and—most striking of all—'Une agitation qui ressemblait fort à l'amour.' But every time the intellect, which is so ineffectual in directing emotion into fruitful channels, shatters the illusion and reveals him to himself as he really is. Only his 'curiosity'—a sinister word in *Adolphe*—is engaged and it vanishes because the heart is empty.

The genesis of the love affair with Ellénore is of particular interest. A friend of Adolphe's at D . . . has been paying court to a lady-in-waiting and after a long and arduous suit succeeds in seducing her. He is so overjoyed at his success that Adolphe jumps to the conclusion that a love affair is the proper solution of his own emotional problems. In other words, the connection with Ellénore does not originate in spontaneous attraction; it originates in an *idea*, in a theory of Adolphe's about his feelings:

'Tourmenté d'une émotion vague, je veux être aimé, me disais-je, et je regardais autour de moi; je ne voyais personne qui m'inspirât de l'amour, personne qui me parût susceptible d'en prendre. J'interrogeais mon coeur et mes goûts; je ne me sentais

[12] *La jeunesse de Benjamin Constant*, 1767–1794, p. 384.

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aucun mouvement de préférence.'

The tragedy lies in the need of filling this interior void at all costs, of finding some means of stilling the devouring *agitation*. He naturally selects the person who can only stimulate and exasperate his own restlessness because she, too, is 'en lutte constante contre sa destinée,' has about her 'quelque chose de fougueux et d'in attendu':

> 'Ellénore n'avait qu'un esprit ordinaire: mais ses idées étaient justes, et ses expressions, toujours simples, étaient quelquefois frappantes par la noblesse et l'élévation de ses sentimens. Elle avait beaucoup de préjugés, mais tous ses préjugés étaient en sens inverse de son intérêt. Elle attachait le plus grand prix à la régularité de la conduite, précisément parce que la sienne n'était pas régulière suivant les notions reçues. Elle était très religieuse, parce que la religion condamnait rigoureusement son genre de vie. . . . Ellénore, en un mot, était en lutte constante contre sa déstinée. . . . Cette opposition entre ses sentimens et la place qu'elle occupait dans le monde avait rendu son humeur fort inégale. . . . Comme elle était tourmentée d'une idée particulière, au milieu de la conversation la plus générale, elle ne restait jamais parfaitement calme. Mais par cela même, il y avait dans sa manière quelque chose de fougueux et d'inattendu, qui la rendait plus piquante qu'elle n'aurait dû l'etre naturellement. La bizarrerie de sa position suppléait en elle à la nouveauté des idées.'

'Ce n'est *elle* [Mme de Staël] que sous le rapport de la tyrannie,' said Rosalie de Constant in a letter to her brother.[13] There is a great deal more of Mme de Staël in Ellénore than Constant admitted or than is sometimes admitted by his critics. The way in which he modified her character is interesting. He may have felt obscurely that in real life Mme de Staël was the dominant partner in the relationship and that it was she who was responsible for the waste of his great gifts. In the novel he takes his revenge. Ellénore is endowed only with an 'esprit ordinaire' and after intolerable suffering on both sides it is Adolphe who destroys her though he ruins himself in the process. The passage closes with one of Constant's rare and lovely images:

> 'On l'examinait avec intérêt et curiosité comme un bel orage.'

This image not only concentrates the diffused emotions of the whole scene; it marks a definite phase in the development of the novel. Adolphe is still the detached observer, but he will not remain so for long. The 'bel orage' looks forward ironically to another sort of storm.

> 'Je pensais faire, en observateur froid et impartial, le tour de son caractère et de son esprit. Mais chaque mot qu'elle disait me semblait revêtu d'une grâce inexplicable.'

The focus is shifting. The 'Je pensais faire . . .' shows that he is no longer altogether the detached observer, that he is becoming

[13] 12th July, 1816. V. *Adolphe*, ed. Rudler, p. 149.

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enveloped in the 'storm.' A few lines later and it has happened.

'Je ne croyais pas aimer Ellénore; mais déjà je n'aurais pu me résigner à ne pas lui plaire.'

He succeeds in making her fall in love with him and the blunt statement: 'Elle se donna enfin tout entière,' is followed by the famous passage which begins, 'Charme de l'amour, qui pourrait vous peindre!' This passage is not, as it is sometimes said to be, a 'lyrical outburst' in the manner of Chateaubriand. It is a close piece of psychological analysis, but it has an immense élan which gives it a special importance. The movement of *Adolphe* is a twofold one. There are sudden élans, sudden expansions of feeling, but intimately connected with them is the reverse movement —the sudden contraction which deflates the feeling of fulness like a bubble and leaves only a desperate sense of emptiness and exhaustion. The 'Charme de l'amour' is followed almost immediately by

'Ellénore était sans doute un vif plaisir dans ma vie: mais elle n'était plus un *but*; elle était devenue un *lien*.'

The theory of the 'goal' and the 'bond' dominated Constant's personal life as it dominates the life of his hero. The intellect proposes the wrong 'goal,' directs feelings into the wrong channels, or at any rate allows them to flow into the wrong channels.[14] With a highly sensitive person this leads to a thoroughgoing emotional disorder:

J' avais souffert deux heures loin d'elle de l'idée qu'elle souffrait loin de moi. Je souffrais deux heures près d'elle, avant de pouvoir l'apaiser.'

'Je souffrais d'ignorer son sort, je souffrais même de ne pas la voir, et j'étais étonné de la peine que cette privation me causait.'

The feelings are described with Constant's customary lucidity, but it is clear that they are *substitute*-feelings—substitutes for the feelings which were lacking in his make-up and which he was perpetually trying to create. This means that all his nervous energy is converted into 'suffering,' into that personal and highly original suffering which springs from the perception of his own incompleteness. Nor should we overlook the speaker's 'astonishment'—it is mentioned more than once in the book—at his sufferings, astonishment that he is capable of such depths of feeling at all. The explanation is given by Adolphe himself in the next chapter:

'Je n'étais qu'un homme faible, reconnaissant et dominé; *je n'étais soutenu par aucune impulsion qui partît du coeur*.'

One of the most remarkable expressions of his emotional instability, of the ceaseless friction of feeling, occurs when he writes (under pressure from Ellénore) to ask his father's permission to

[14]It is significant that the only happy period of Constant's life came after the last love affair with Mme Récamier when he settled down to humdrum married life with Charlotte von Hardenberg and devoted the whole of his energies to their proper 'goal' which was politics.

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spend another six months at D . . . :

'La réponse de mon père ne se fit pas attendre. Je tremblais, en ouvrant sa lettre, de la douleur qu'un refus causerait à Ellénore. . . . Mais en lisant le consentement qu'il m'accordait, tous les inconvéniens d'une prolongation de séjour se présentèrent tout-à-coup à mon esprit. Encore six mois de gêne et de contrainte, m'écriai-je. . . .'

When the time comes for his departure he describes his emotion in some sentences which are one of the glories of this sombre master piece:

'Il y a dans les liaisons qui se prolongent quelque chose de si profond! Elles deviennent à notre insu une partie si intime de notre existence! Nous formons de loin, avec calme, la résolution de les rompre, nous croyons attendre avec impatience l'époque de l'exécuter; mais quand ce moment arrive il nous remplit de terreur; *et telle est la bizarrerie de notre coeur misérable, que nous quittons avec un déchirement horrible, ceux près de qui nous demeurions sans plaisir.*'

IV.

Paul Bourget once declared that the whole drama of *Adolphe* lies in 'la continuelle destruction de l'amour dans ce coeur de jeune homme par la pensée, et le continuel effort de la maîtresse pour reconstruire à force de passion et de tendresse, le sentiment qu'elle voit s'écrouler.'[15]

This view cannot be accepted without reservations. I have tried to show that the role of the intellect is other than Bourget suggests; but it is true that both Adolphe and Ellénore up to a point mistake the shadow for the substance and in the last part of the book she tries ironically to reconstruct an illusion.[16] For *Adolphe* has three phases. The first is the pursuit of the 'goal'—the conquest and seduction of Ellénore. The second is the period of disenchantment—the discovery that there is no 'goal.' In the third, the 'goal' is the rupture with Ellénore.

In the last phase there is a new alignment of forces and Adolphe, in spite of himself, makes common cause with his father and the Baron de T . . . in the destruction of his mistress. When his father writes:

'Votre naissance, vos talens, votre fortune, vous assignaient dans le monde une autre place que celle de compagnon d'une femme sans patrie et sans aveu. Votre lettre me prouve déjà que vous n'êtes pas content de vous. Songez que l'on ne gagne rien à prolonger une situation dont on rougit. Vous consumez inutilement les plus belles années de votre jeunesse, et cette perte est irréparable.'

—he is voicing thoughts which have already occurred to Adolphe himself:

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[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

[16] *Cf.* 'Elle me crut: elle s'enivra de *son* amour, qu'elle prenait pour le *nôtre*. . . .'

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'Je me plaignis de ma vive contrainte, de ma jeunesse consumée dans l'inaction, du despotisme qu'elle exerçait sur toutes mes démarches.'

The father's voice is heard again as Adolphe prepares to leave for Poland, and in Poland it is echoed by the Baron de T . . ., who becomes, as it were, an extension of the father's role:

'Toutes les routes vous sont ouvertes . . . mais souvenez-vous bien qu'il y a entre vous et tous les genres de succès un obstacle insurmontable, et que cet obstacle est Ellénore.'

These words reverberate in Adolphe's mind and they do not fail to make an impression:

'Ces mots funestes, entre tous les genres de succès et vous, il existe un obstacle insurmontable, et cet obstacle, c'est Ellénore, retentissaient autour de moi.'

The drama is more complex than at first appeared. The outer conflict between father and son, between the individual and society, is reflected in the inner conflict in Adolphe's mind. The voices of the father and the Baron are like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. Whatever their shortcomings they represent a norm. The *convenances*, we remember, are *factices mais nécessaires*. Convention is beginning to assert itself:

'Chère amie, lui dis-je, on lutte quelque temps contre sa destinée, mais on finit toujours par céder. Les lois de la société sont plus fortes que les volontés des hommes. Les sentimens les plus impérieux se brisent contre la fatalité des circonstances. En vain l'on s'obstine à ne consulter que son *coeur*: on est condamné tôt ou tard à écouter la *raison*. . . . Je serai toujours votre ami. J'aurai toujours pour vous l'affection la plus profonde. Les deux années de notre liaison ne s'effaceront pas de ma mémoire: elles seront à jamais l'époque la plus belle de ma vie.'

In another passage he reflects:

'Ah! si le ciel m'eût accordé une femme que les *convenances sociales* me permissent d'avouer, que mon père ne rougît pas d'accepter pour fille, j'aurais été mille fois plus heureux.'...

These passages reveal the extent to which Adolphe has compromised with society. The attitude that he displays is not held up to admiration. His father's disapproval of the connection with Ellénore is understandable, but there is no genuine *moral conviction* behind this disapproval. The intentional vulgarity of the first passage and the *convenances sociales*, which always have a derogatory meaning, in the second provide all the comment that is necessary.

It is in other places that we must look for that peculiar wisdom which the book distils. It has not been sufficiently remarked that it contains a number of general statements which read for all the world like maxims lifted from the pages of the seventeenth-century moralists:

'C'est un affreux malheur de n'être pas aimé quand on aime. Mais c'en est un bien grand d'être aimé avec passion, quand on n'aime pas.'

'L'emportement, l'injustice, la distraction même se réparent. Mais la dissimulation jette dans l'amour un élément étranger qui

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le dénature et le flétrit à ses propres yeux.'

'Cette duplicité était fort éloignée de mon caractère naturel: mais l'homme se déprave, dès qu'il a dans le coeur une seule pensée qu'il est constamment forcé de dissimuler.'

They are not abstractions or conclusions which are imposed on experience from without. They are statements of general validity which emerge logically from his experience. They are always dramatically appropriate—the last quotation is a particularly good example—and fall into their appointed places, carrying in each case the revelation of Adolphe to himself a stage further. They provide a background of sanity which places Adolphe's disordered feelings and the shabby *convenances* in their true perspective. It is this that gives the whole book its incomparable poise and maturity.

The more one studies the text of *Adolphe*, the more impressed one is by the skill with which it is constructed, with which the diverse strands are woven into the pattern. The inner and outer conflicts revolve like concentric circles. Phrases and words are constantly echoing and answering one another. The 'travail assez opiniâtre au milieu d'une vie très dissipée,' which had distinguished Adolphe from his fellow-students, is recalled to show that while he had wasted his youth in idleness less gifted men 'par le seul effort d'un travail opiniâtre et d'une vie régulière, m'avaient laissé loin derrière eux dans la route de la fortune.' The 'bel orage,' which he had complacently examined from without, becomes another kind of storm—'Notre vie ne fut qu'un perpétuel orage.' In the same way images dovetail neatly into one another, contributing to the strength and tautness of the book. Ellénore makes a desperate effort to break down the opposition to her which has grown up in Adolphe's mind:

'Elle aurait voulu *pénétrer dans le sanctuaire intime* de ma pensée, pour y briser une opposition sourde qui la révoltait contre moi.'

When she succeeds by the intermediary of a third person in breaking into the 'sanctuary,' it is only to find it deserted:

'C'est un grand pas, c'est un pas irréparable, lorsqu'on dévoile tout-à-coup aux yeux d'un tiers les replis cachés d'une relation intime. Le jour qui *pénètre dans ce sanctuaire* constate et achève les destructions que la nuit enveloppait de ses ombres; ainsi les corps renfermés dans les tombeaux conservent souvent leur première forme, jusqu'à ce que l'air extérieur vienne les frapper et les réduire en poudre.'

There is something stuffy and unnatural about the connection between Adolphe and this woman who is ten years his senior which gives us the sensation of two people living in an airless, over-heated boudoir without any contact with the outside world. As soon as it is brought out into the open for a moment and discussed with other people it begins to crumble away.[17]

[17]As an example of the extent to which they were cut off from the normative influence of society, he remarks of his conversation with the 'intermediary':

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I have said that the images dovetail into one another, but the connection between them is so close that it would be more exact to call them sections of a single expanded image. Ellénore's attempt to break down Adolphe's opposition to her provokes a contrary movement which is expressed in the third or final section of the image:

> 'Que je n'entende de vous, dit-elle, aucun mot cruel. Je ne réclame plus, je ne m'oppose à rien; mais que cette voix que j'ai tant aimée, que cette voix, qui retentissait au fond de mon coeur, *n'y pénètre pour le déchirer*.'

Although the 'storms' described in the closing chapters remind us of the bitter encounters between Racine's characters, the resemblance is a superficial one. They are the sign of nervous exasperation and their function is to reveal an interior, subterranean process of dissolution[18]:

> 'Nous vivions, pour ainsi dire, d'une espèce de mémoire du coeur, assez puissante pour que l'idée de nous séparer fût douloureuse, trop faible pour que nous trouvassions du bonheur à être unis. . . . J'aurais voulu donner à Ellénore des témoignages de tendresse qui la contentassent. Je reprenais quelquefois avec elle le langage de l'amour: mais ces émotions et ce langage ressemblaient à ces feuilles pâles et décolorées, qui, par un reste de végétation funèbre, croissent languissament sur les branches d'un arbre déraciné.'

The passage is constructed out of simple materials which seem at first to give it a literary flavour; but when we look into it, we see how effective the first sentence is in describing the atmosphere of gradual dissolution. The 'reste de végétation funèbre,' the 'feuilles pâles et décolorées' and the dying fall of 'croissent languissament sur les branches d'un arbre déraciné' convey not merely the dissolution of an attachment, but the disappearance of all feeling. It is characteristic of Constant's images that they nearly all lead back to the speaker. It is Adolphe himself who is the 'arbre déraciné.'

These images are not numerous—it is this that makes them stand out with such power—but each one leads logically to the next and marks a further stage in the process of decay. The sections of the landscape image are as closely linked as those of the image of the 'sanctuaire intime,' and the separate strands of the images winding in and out of one another give the book its rich complexity:

> 'C'était une de ces journées d'hiver, où le soleil éclaire tristement la campagne grisâtre, comme s'il regardait en pitié la terre qu'il avait cessé de réchauffer. . . . Le ciel était serein:

> 'Les reproches d'Ellénore m'avaient persuadé que j'étais coupable; j'appris de celle qui croyait la défendre que je n'étais que malheureux.'

[18] *Cf.* 'La vérité se fit jour de toutes parts, et j'empruntai, pour me faire entendre, les expressions les plus dures et les plus impitoyables.'

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mais les arbres étaient sans feuilles: aucun souffle n'agitait l'air, aucun oiseau ne le traversait, tout était immobile, et le seul bruit qui se fît entendre était celui de l'herbe glacée qui se brisait sous nos pas. Comme tout est calme, me dit Ellénore, comme la nature se résigne! Le coeur ne doit-il pas apprendre à se résigner?'

Constant's experience is never merely personal. The autumnal imagery, with its emphasis on death and decay, faithfully reflects the age that produced it. The change from autumn to winter, too, has its point. It marks the beginning of a new phase of the experience and it brings out the difference between Ellénore and Adolphe. In spite of her extravagances, Ellénore stands for life and vitality, as Adolphe stands for an arid intellectualism which destroys both. The barren beauty of the scene, the pale sunshine which no longer warms the earth and the sigh of resignation leave an almost painful sensation of life running to waste. Adolphe's dilemma is not less painful. What feeling persists stiffens, becomes hard and brittle as a frozen immobility steals over it.

It has been said that Constant was lacking in imagination and unfavourable comparisons between his style and Chateaubriand's were not uncommon among nineteenth-century critics. Faguet, for example, called him 'un Chateaubriand qui n'est pas assez poète pour faire de son ennui une grande mélancolie lyrique.'[19] This judgment seems to rest on a misunderstanding of the nature of imagination. All that it means is that instead of writing a poetical prose in the manner of the Romantics with their large blurred effects, Constant confines himself strictly to the prose use of language. His genius like Racine's is the genius of the French language. In English and German literature there is often an unanalysed residue in the feelings presented. We are conscious of intimate stresses and frustrations beating behind a wall of words, and this makes a whole poem or a whole novel vague and blurred. In Constant's prose there is no vagueness and no blur. He possessed the great French masters' power of seizing the obscurest feelings at the moment of their formation and translating them into exact language. Not a shade, not a tremor escapes him. This is not all. What is striking about his style is the number of different notes that he succeeded in extracting from his instrument. It ranges from passages of precise analysis and adaptions of the seventeenth-century moralists to passages like 'Charme de l'amour' and the autumnal imagery of the closing chapters which reveals his exceptional delicacy in rendering the shift and change of mood, his power of enclosing in a concrete image feelings which seem to lie just beyond language.

His clearsightedness and restraint are seen at their best in the descriptions of Adolphe's state of mind at the time of Ellénore's death:

'Ce n'était pas les regrets de l'amour, c'était un sentiment plus sombre et plus triste. L'amour s'identifie tellement à l'objet aimé, que dans son désespoir même il y a quelque charme.

[19] *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

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Il lutte contre la réalité, contre la destinée; l'ardeur de son désir le trompe sur ses forces, et l'exalte au milieu de sa douleur. La mienne était morne et solitaire. Je n'espérais point mourir avec Ellénore. J'allais vivre sans elle dans ce désert du monde, que j'avais souhaité tant de fois de traverser indépendant. J'avais brisé l'être qui m'aimait: j'avais brisé ce coeur, compagnon du mien, qui avait persisté à se dévouer à moi, dans sa tendresse infatigable. Déjà l'isolement m'atteignait.'

The speaker begins by defining the normal reactions to a situation, then he turns suddenly on himself and shows how his reactions differ from the normal. The movement of the passage is characteristic. Love may mistake its strength, but the vigour behind the 'lutte contre la réalité' and 'l'ardeur de son désir' is genuine and it is contrasted with the horrible sinking sensation that one feels in 'La mienne était morne et solitaire.' The short, broken phrases, 'J'avais brisé l'être qui m'aimait,' 'J'avais brisé ce coeur, compagnon du mien,' fall like blows striking down the mistress and, at the same time, driving into Adolphe's mind the consciousness of his own isolation.

'Je sentis le dernier lien se rompre, et l'affreuse réalité se placer à jamais entre elle et moi. Combien elle me pesait, cette liberté que j'avais tant regrettée! Combien elle manquaite à mon coeur, cette dépendance qui m'avait révolté souvent! Naguère, toutes mes actions avaient un but. J'étais sûr, par chacune d'elles, d'épargner une peine ou de causer un plaisir. Je m'en plaignais alors. J'étais impatienté qu'un oeil ami observât mes démarches, que le bonheur d'un autre y fût attaché. Personne maintenant ne les observait: elles n'intéressaient personne. Nul ne me disputait mon temps, ni mes heures: aucune voix ne me rappelait quand je sortais: j'étais libre en effet; je n'étais plus aimé: j'étais étranger pour tout le monde.'

This is the final stage in the revelation of Adolphe to himself. He had been living in a world of illusion, carefully shielded from the uncomfortable world of everyday life by Ellénore's extraordinary though oppressive devotion. Now the awakening, which he had dimly perceived like an uneasy dreamer, has come. The final link snaps and 'l'affreuse réalité' imposes itself upon him. He has reached his 'goal,' he has rid himself of the 'bond' only to find that life has suddenly lost his meaning, that he has become an outcast in a world that he does not know. The problem lies in the 'besoin de sensibilité' and it is insoluble. Ellénore ministered to his need and for a time gave him the illusion of fulfilment. It is Adolphe's incapacity for certain feelings which makes her at once a tyrant and a necessity, so that her death dissolves the 'bond' without solving the problem. The aim of the passage is the definition of a particular state of mind. It moves with mathematical precision from one point to another, from the shock of awakening in 'Je sentis le dernier lien se rompre' to the complete helplessness of 'J'étais étranger pour tout le monde.' The perception that there is no longer any 'goal,' that no one is interested in him any longer are stages on the way. The short, staccato phrases perform a different

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function in this passage. They express a powerful sensation of disintegration, as though the speaker were falling apart.

'*Adolphe*,' wrote Pourtalès, 'a enrichi le monde d'une souffrance nouvelle.'[19] The interior void, the feeling of life ebbing into the sand, which is the heart of *Adolphe*, is something new in European literature. It is different from Pascal's *angoisse métaphysique* and from the sense of emptiness and waste that we feel in *l'Education sentimentale*.

When we compare *Adolphe* with the productions of our own time, we may easily conclude that its direct influence on the development of the novel has been very great. This is almost certainly a mistake. It is rather that the way in which man and society have developed has imposed a certain method on the novelist. Constant was the first representative of a fresh situation and his novel is an eminent example of a new technique.

Constant's maturity and the way in which his moral experience is an integral part of his emotional experience give *Adolphe* its immense stature among modern novels, make it a standard by which other writers can be tested. Far from being merely a personal confession, it is the record, as all great art must be, of something that happened to human nature as a whole. It records the disintegration of the unity of the individual in a hostile environment. All Adolphe's best faculties—his magnificent intelligence, his nervous vitality—are at odds with one another and contribute to the work of destruction, and this makes him the ancestor of the heroes of innumerable modern novels. The unity of the individual is restored in Balzac, but it is an artificial and not an organic unity. It is only accomplished through simplification and omissions, and the surface complexity and bustle of the *Comédie humaine* fail to conceal a profoundly immature view of life. Constant's unerring sense of moral values is one of his outstanding merits, but it is clear that his hold on them is precarious, that humanity is turning its back on them and moving in the other direction. Its absence accounts for the emptiness of Flaubert's novels and the vacancy and fatuity of his characters, bringing him closer than he was aware to fulfilling his sinister ambition 'to write a novel about nothing.' Proust and Gide show how far the process has gone since Flaubert. Indeed, a comparison between Constant and Gide—a writer whose background and habits of mind are similar in some respects—provides a salutary comment on the fashionable and admiring description of Gide as 'the greatest living writer.'

MARTIN TURNELL.

[19] *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

This number comes out at the normal interval after the last—which is to say that the Editors have not yet succeeded in making up the lag. Difficulties at the printing-house have been insuperable.

Readers will find that the review section is again short. The Editors intend to include a greater proportion of reviewing in the next number. There is, however, not only the problem of space; to get the due reviewing done becomes more and more difficult as the connexion disperses.

The next number will contain a further instalment of the essay on Chaucer. (If the present instalment exhibits any defect of proof-reading, that is because John Speirs is at Cairo and to send the proofs there and back was out of the question). There will also be a further instalment of *A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings* by Q. D. Leavis, and a survey of the Irish Novel by D. J. Enright.

MILTON AGAIN

A PREFACE TO PARADISE LOST, by C. S. Lewis (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d.).

In recent years some of the noisiest thwacks on the literary battlefield have been delivered by those who have felt themselves called on to defend Milton against his 'modern detractors.' Mr. C. S. Lewis, whose little book is intended as a contribution to the defence, is at least courteous to his opponents; he genuinely wishes to persuade and not merely to browbeat them. But I doubt whether *A Preface to Paradise Lost* will in fact persuade many of those who have examined their reasons for disagreeing with the customary attitude towards the poet.

It can hardly be too often repeated that the first aim of literary criticism is, by means of a supple and disciplined attention to the use of words, to explore and assess the sensibility of each particular writer, to discover, that is, the range and quality of that perceptiveness, physical and moral, which nourishes and is nourished by the life of the emotions. Any discussion of literature not informed and controlled by this purpose is bound to be peripheral—at best—or irrelevant and misleading. In the light of this simple truth Mr. Lewis's account of Milton's aims and achievement is seen to be built up from the outside; it does not strike to the centre.

The point can be illustrated from Mr. Lewis's justification of the Miltonic style. The defence is founded on a distinction, elaborated in several sections, between 'Primary epic,' intended to be listened to (the *Iliad, Beowulf*), and 'Secondary epic,' intended to be read (the *Aeneid, Paradise Lost*). The style of Virgil and Milton, the argument proceeds:

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'arises as the solution of a very definite problem. The Secondary epic aims at an even higher solemnity than the Primary; but it has lost all those external aids to solemnity which the Primary enjoyed. There is no robed and garlanded *aoidos*, no altar, not even a feast in a hall—only a private person reading a book in an armchair. Yet somehow or other, that private person must be made to feel that he is assisting at an august ritual. . . . The sheer writing of the poem, therefore, must now do, of itself, what the whole occasion helped to do for Homer. The Virgilian and Miltonic style is there to compensate for—to counteract—the privacy and informality of silent reading in a man's own study. Every judgment on it which does not realize this will be inept. To blame it for being ritualistic or incantatory, for lacking intimacy or the speaking voice, is to blame it for being just what it intends to be and ought to be.'

This is to disarm criticism with a vengeance. Wielding his bright Excalibur Mr. Lewis can slice off the head of every objection. If we remark, as Mr. Eliot has done, that many passages demand two kinds of reading, one for the sound and another for the sense, and that the two kinds fail to coalesce,—that doesn't matter: 'we have only to *play* at the complex syntax' whilst attending to the 'underlying simplicity' and allowing ourselves to be carried forward by the 'great unflagging voice.' The Latin constructions? These are a contribution to fluidity, for by means of them Milton overcomes the difficulties of an uninflected language and, moreover, achieves something like 'the indivisible, flowing quality of immediate experience.' The calculated loftiness of manner? This is to emphasize that the poem is not simply a poem but a ritual in which we are participants: 'I am defending Milton's style as a ritual style.'

Mr. Lewis accompanies his observations with some more detailed criticism of particular passages, but it isn't very convincing. A fair sample is his analysis of Milton's presentation of Paradise in Book IV (pp. 46–50). Leaving aside the questionable and question-begging assumption that Milton 'has only to make a show of describing the garden itself,' that he has only to evoke 'certain very basic images in the human mind,' certain 'archetypal patterns,' we remark that the criticism is all external, displaying an almost complete insensitiveness to the most obvious qualities of the verse. The only objection that Mr. Lewis seems to be aware of is that Paradise 'contains all the right things'; a more serious objection is that it is not deeply felt. The inflexible movement, the formal epithets, the often inappropriate imagery betray the lack of that essential quality that Wordsworth called organic sensibility. Even a ritual style (if we grant that this is an appropriate or useful description) can hardly be effective unless the ritual really does spring from a firm and sensitive grasp of what is celebrated.

Failure of this kind makes so much of Mr. Lewis's argument seem abstract and irrelevant. To discuss the theological significance of Adam whilst failing to notice that the Adam presented for our admiration in Book IV is simply a lay figure is to substitute

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something quite other than Milton's poetry for our attention. The Section on Satan is a useful corrective to the naïvely romantic view of that hero; but even here Mr. Lewis fails to notice the superior energy—poetical energy—of the first two Books and therefore can make no attempt to estimate its significance. He disposes of Shelley, who probably had Prometheus in mind when writing of Satan, but I don't think he disposes of Blake.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

LANDOR AND THE SEASONED EPICURE

SAVAGE LANDOR, by Malcolm Elwin (*Macmillan*, 18/-).

Landor, we all know, is a test. As Mr. Elwin, whose concern to be modern, though much in evidence,[1] doesn't manifest itself in any critical unorthodoxy, puts it, he is 'no meal for the superficial education of self-help manuals; he is a feast only for the seasoned epicure.' Landor, that is, though much admired, is little read. He can be faced only in small volumes of selections and extracts, and few epicures, however seasoned, open these often or for long at a time. (The Blackwell collected edition is monumental—a kind of mausoleum; it will hardly increase the number of Landor's readers.)

George Moore, Mr. Elwin tells us, said of Landor: 'A writer as great as Shakespeare, surely.' We recall Yeats's conviction that Moore had never read a play of Shakespeare's through. It is, however, likely that he had read with some assiduity in Landor; for Landor stands for Style, and there was a peculiarly pleasing rightness about being told by Mr. Charles Morgan, in his *Epitaph on George Moore*, that Moore held Landor and Pater to be the supreme masters of English prose. Moore's own prose—of the phase of the 'beautiful' writing—is related to Pater's rather than Landor's (it is partly the product of studying the Authorized Version in the spirit of Pater); but Landor can fairly be credited with the invention of Style, and we readily believe that Moore's admiration for him was unaffected. (And, interestingly enough, I haven't yet been able to find an admirer who, when pressed, will claim to have read *The Book Kerith*, or any one of the beautifully written books, through.)

Landor, of course, was not an Aesthete: his great admiration was Milton. 'My prejudices in favour of ancient literature,' he

[1]See, for example, his explanation (p. 117) of how, 'because of the Church's misunderstanding of St. Paul, Christian civilization came to be built on the unsound, because unnatural, basis of monogamy.' 'Obviously he meant [in the First Epistle to the Corinthians] by the ideal state a condition of enlightened culture in which the individual could be trusted with unfettered liberty and independence, man and woman meeting in free attraction, without the indignity of economic liability.'

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tells us, 'began to wear away on reading "Paradise Lost".' His ambition, never wholly abandoned, had been to earn enduring fame as a writer of Latin, and he could say: 'I am sometimes at a loss for an English word, for a Latin, never.' The majesty of Milton's language, says Mr. Elwin, 'was bound to appeal to Landor, for when he came to write the prose which comprises his principal bequest to posterity, his aim and achievement was the ideal dignity of language.' That is not a bad description of Landor's aim. Milton's, we know, has to be suggested in very different terms, and to it his preoccupation with dignity of language was subordinated. Mr. Elwin doesn't remind us of the difference, but he tells us a little further on that, though writing was the steady main activity of Landor's long life, he refused to regard literature as a profession: 'for him it was always the hobby of the cultured amateur.'

Another and closely related point Mr. Elwin makes in this way: 'The confines of the novel, the epic, and the drama were too limited.' Landor, that is, settled down to the Imaginary Conversation because he found in it a way of cultivating ideal dignity of style and ideal attitudes without submitting himself to the discipline of creative writing—the discipline that subserves the kind of creative purpose without which there can be no form. He read at large and he wrote at large, culling in easy abundance from his reading the characters and situations upon which to indulge his monotonously noble attitudes. Preoccupied as he was with his preconceived nobilities, and immune from any creative conception such as commands an artist to self-surrender, he was bound to be monotonous. 'Clever monopoly-dialogues' is what a critic quoted by Mr. Elwin aptly calls the Imaginary Conversations;—'developing under a plurality of names the uniform material of a very peculiar idiosyncrasy.' They are not in the least 'scenes as it were from unwritten dramas' (E. de Sélincourt's introduction to the *World's Classics* selection). They suffer not merely from the lack of context, but from the lack of any dramatic principle, or any principle of life whatever that we might feel informing them from beneath. They give us Landor composing his memorable sentences and his paragraphs, and arranging his noble attitudes.

And when he does offer at all insistently to be dramatic he is likely to provoke us to downright rejection. Commenting on his fondness for 'stage tyrants,' Professor de Sélincourt says: 'their very exaggeration serves an obvious artistic purpose. It strengthens our sense of pathos at the sight of an exquisite fragile beauty . . . trodden under a wanton and muddy heel.' An obvious purpose indeed. That is the trouble with Landor's effects, the noblenesses, the manly tendernesses and the arch innocences alike. There is nothing of the genuinely dramatic about them; the design upon us is direct and patent.

Not that he is often gross. The main charge is that he is boring.

> 'Again I laughed aloud and heartily; and, thinking it was now my part of the game, I held out both my arms and protruded my whole body toward the stranger. He would not receive me

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from my father's neck, but he asked me with benignity and solicitude if I was hungry: at which I laughed again, and more than ever: for it was early in the morning, soon after the first meal, and my father had nourished me most carefully and plentifully in all the days of the famine. But Xanthus, waiting for no answer, took out of a sack, which one of his slaves carried at his side, a cake of wheaten bread and piece of honey-comb, and gave them to me. I held the honey-comb to my father's mouth, thinking it the most of a dainty. He dashed it to the ground; but, seizing the bread, he began to devour it ferociously. This also I thought was in play; and I clapped my hands at his distortions. . . . The more violent my cries, the more rapidly they hurried me away; and many were soon between us. Little was I suspicious that he had suffered the pangs of famine long before: alas! and he had suffered them for me. Do I weep while I am telling you they ended? I could not have closed his eyes; I was too young; but I might have received his last breath; the only comfort of an orphan's bosom. Do you now think him blameable, O Aesop?'

—That is more representative than the 'Helen died, Laodameia died' passage. And his fine things—which are usually thoughts rather than paragraphs—don't really, in the absence of significant context, do much beside remind us of a talent dissipated in industrious self-indulgence. Landor, gifted as he was, had not the greatness that enables an artist to find a discipline and a form in an age that doesn't put them obviously in his way.

Or perhaps it may be said that the right form for his talent is to be seen in the verse epigrams. A number of these, in their minor way, have a genuine anthology-life. In them the mannered dignity appears as belonging to the convention he is avowedly working in, and the sentiment is qualified by the conscious neatness of the verse and by the conventional frame. In more extended uses of verse, Landor is disabled by the same lack as in prose—the lack of any serious creative purpose. The *Hellenics* have their monotonous distinction of manner, and may be sampled with some mild interest; but there is no need to pretend that the cultivated person ought to have read them with enthusiasm. And few will persist long at *Gebir* or *Chrysaor*.

In a world where there is more literature worth attention than anyone can hope to find time for, it seems worse than pointless to keep up the pretence that Landor is, or should be, current classic, yielding to the elect an elevated delight.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDES

A HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION, by Sir William Dampier (Cambridge University Press, 25/-).

When the first edition of this book was published in 1929, no comprehensive attempt to trace the development of science had been made since the publication of Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences* in the middle of last century, and it was consequently something of a pioneer work; and it is perhaps mildly surprising, and certainly disappointing, to realize that it is still, in a sense, a pioneer work. There has been, admittedly, a good deal of activity in this field, and some of it welcome activity. In 1936 courses in the history of science were initiated at Cambridge; several histories of science have appeared; and popular scientific textbooks with a marked historical bias, like Professor Hogben's *Science for the Citizen*, have been written. Yet in general this work, though undertaken for the most part by scientists rather than by historians, has tended to accept a place merely as a department of history; and the prevailing fashions in historical analysis are largely of a kind which offers as an historical explanation of a phenomenon its correlation with certain of the data of economics. The bias has been, therefore, towards the bracketing of science, not with philosophy, but rather with 'technology.' So that the work envisaged by Professor Burtt in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*, of examining historically the part played by scientists in determining our habits of language and modes of thinking, has (leaving aside the work under review) progressed very little from where he himself left it.

Now this kind of study has both a general and a particular relevance to the purpose of general education. The general application is readily enough apparent: the history of science is clearly a very influential element in what University examiners call 'background'—the possibility of supposing otherwise is perhaps a legacy of classical historians not themselves writing in a scientific *milieu*. The particular application refers to the by now (in certain quarters) well-recognized state of affairs whereby a curious bifurcation of thought has appeared in the present century, so that the currency of scientific ideas of the last century has become the commonplace of present-day thought and language, while scientists themselves—physicists in particular—have found it convenient to depart substantially from those ideas in their work, with the result that two sets of scientific ideas, which are to some extent incompatible, are now current, and can frequently be detected side by side in the quasi-philosophical writings of some scientific workers. This last circumstance has given rise, in the absence of proper philosophical authority, to a certain amount of confusion. It is interesting to consider the kind of light which a study of the origin of scientific concepts, which forms a large part of this type of scientific history, throws on these problems.

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Sir William draws attention to the disadvantage to both science and philosophy which has accrued as a result of their separation, which has prevailed to a greater or lesser degree since about the time of Kant; and it is useful at the outset to attempt some clarification of the relations between science, metaphysics, and everyday thinking. There is a sense in which it is impossible to say anything at all without talking metaphysics; that is, we cannot refer to the 'manifold of experience' without making use of symbols whose definition implies some classification of that experience—an arbitrary assumption of a certain degree of uniformity. Even the artificially simple statements devised by philosophers—like so-called 'incorrigible propositions,' turn out on inspection to involve a considerable degree of (logically) arbitrary conceptualization. 'There is a red patch now,' for example, demonstrates at first sight the introduction of conceptions of 'thereness' and 'nowness'—the expression records, in other words, a determination to analyse experience in accordance with the concepts of space and time. It was in recognition of this arbitrariness that all statements were referred to above as 'metaphysical': in practice so wide an application of this adjective would undermine its usefulness, and its employment is, in fact, generally more limited in philosophical writings, in a way shortly to be indicated. If we now recognize that arbitrary concepts of space and time have been introduced into our symbolization of experience, and proceed, firstly, to define these symbols as precisely as possible, and, secondly, to examine the consequences of our definitions as fully as possible—we are then doing what Galileo did with precisely these concepts: what Newton did with the concept of mass, and Rankine and William Thomson with the concept of energy: we are, in fact, engaging in scientific activity. In Sir William's words: 'In creating a new science from the confused medley of observed phenomena and vague ideas which form its subject-matter, the first step is always to pick out concepts which can be given exact definition, at all events for a time, and if possible in a form which enables us to submit them to quantitative mathematical treatment. In order to put his problem of the acceleration of falling bodies into a shape possible of investigation, Galileo first gave exact mathematical form to the old concepts of space and time' (p. 145). Having thus precipitated the specifically scientific activity from that of normal experiencing and thinking, it is then convenient to limit the application of the adjective 'metaphysical' to any statement involving our symbolized concepts whose truth or falsity could not be determined by any conceivable experiment; this conforms to a now common usage of the word, and maintains the continuity of science with ordinary thinking on the one hand, and with metaphysics on the other.

The tone of the above quotation from Sir William's book indicates a consciousness of important limitations too frequently absent from writing of this kind: the phrases 'at all events for a time' and 'if possible,' draw attention to elements in scientific thinking which we shall now have to consider.

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Take first the mathematical bogey. The development of mathematical logic during the last half-century or so has made it clear that mathematics as ordinarily understood is only one department of the symbolization of logical procedures—the department appropriate to the analysis of quantitative relations. The existence of this highly-developed deductive scheme meant, historically, that when it was possible to define a concept in such a way as to make it susceptible to mathematical treatment, far-reaching and often unforeseen conclusions could automatically be drawn. It was therefore of immense advantage to anyone wishing to investigate the consequences of a definition to frame that definition in terms amenable to quantification. Some men, like Copernicus and Kepler, had mystical motives for wishing to do this, and share with Sir James Jeans the acceptance of neo-Platonic doctrines of number; but, in general, the men whose intense labour devised symbols so defined that they would at once be taken to refer to aspects of our experience and could also be submitted to mathematical processes would have felt somewhat ill-rewarded to be told that our experience was necessarily mathematical because God was a pure mathematician. The converse activity has also taken place, of course: the infinitesimal calculus was devised by Leibnitz and Newton under the pressure of the need for a symbolic means of treating continuous processes; Hamiltonian functions were developed to simplify the treatment of the data of dynamics. But the nature of more recent experimental data has called more and more for symbolic treatment of a somewhat different kind. Many of the facts of biology and of social psychology and some of the facts of physics involving irreversible processes have only been susceptible to rigorous organization by the application of the calculus of probability. And it seems not unlikely that, in the future, the development of science, particularly of the social sciences, may involve the framing of definitions to which the theorems of mathematical logic can be applied,[1] thus dispensing with the notion of 'quantity' and employing more general notions such as that of implication. However that may be, it is clear that, although the rapid development of science has been largely dependent upon the use of mathematics, it is logically independent of the existence of any scheme of formal deduction, and in particular is independent of the notion of quantity.

The other phrase in Sir William's account of the procedure of defining scientific concepts, 'good at all events for a time,' draws attention to the logical arbitrariness of that procedure; that is to say, there may be psychological or historical reasons for the selection of a particular concept (such as the existence of mathematics or the possbility of incorporating the concept within an already existing deductive system), but logically there is nothing to determine the choice of one concept rather than another. This is a point often

[1] *cf.* the Introduction to Professor C. V. Quine's recent book, *Mathematical Logic.*

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overlooked, and deserves some illustration. It is sometimes said (by Sir William, for example) that it is possible to prove or disprove a given scientific hypothesis by means of some critical experiment or set of experiments. Aristotle's view, for instance, that of two bodies released together from a given height, the heavier will fall more quickly than the lighter, is said to be 'disproved' by the experiment of Stevin and de Groot, showing that bodies of similar shape but unequal weight when let fall together reach the ground simultaneously. In history, this conclusion was in fact drawn; but it is by no means a logically necessary conclusion. It is quite possible to accommodate Artistotle's view to the facts by some such argument as this: the speed at which a body falls is defined as the distance through which it falls divided by the time in which it falls; if, therefore, we wish to retain the hypothesis that the two speeds are unequal, we have only to deny the equality either of the two distances, or of the two times. It would be logically possible to maintain that either time or distance must be defined in such a way that it was a function of the mass of the falling body, and would therefore differ for each body. Since the work of Lorenz and Einstein has become generally known, such an idea would not seem completely unacceptable; in Galileo's time it would have been extremely inconvenient. It is in fact Sir William's reiterated contention that the main difference between speculative philosophy and science lies in the extent to which speculative philosophy goes beyond the requirements of experience in formulating its definitions. In the time of Ptolemy, for example, the view of Aristarchus that the earth revolved about the sun was an unnecessarily complicated one, going beyond the observed facts, and therefore speculative, whereas the geocentric view of Hipparchus accounted simply and accurately for all the known facts, and was therefore a scientific one. This was still the case in the time of Copernicus, and consequently the weight of the best contemporary scientific opinion was against him. Since then the considerable structure of Newtonian mechanics has been built upon the Copernican theory, and to revert to the view of Hipparchus would involve a great deal of labour in rewriting equations, and would probably yield a much more complicated result. There are, however, no criteria by which we can determine the 'truth' or 'falsity' of the Aristarchus–Hipparchus alternatives, or of any other alternative hypothesis of science whose definitions both fit the facts, except the merely convenient ones of Occam's razor and compatibility with existing definitions.

This important point about the nature of a scientific theory isn't always kept clearly in sight in the book under review. Referring to the principle of the conservation of matter, for example, Sir William says, 'Lavoisier, by the unanswerable evidence of the balance, showed that although matter may alter its state in a series of chemical actions, it does not change in amount, the quantity of matter is the same at the end as at the beginning of every operation, and can be traced throughout by its weight' (p. 199). 'Assuming,' he might have added, 'that weight is proportional to mass,' because

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it is logically possible, and not altogether unreasonable, to contradict this assumption by denying that the weight of a falling body is equivalent to the force acting on it when falling. This denial would have extensive consequences, which would be interesting for, say, a student of advanced logic to investigate as an exercise. Though the performance of such an exercise might impress on him the desirability of retaining the definitions which in fact have been adopted, it would emancipate him from any illusions about their inevitability.

It is necessary to insist on the arbitrariness of the concepts adopted by scientists because it is from the awareness that certain concepts have in fact been adopted that some philosophers and many philosophically-inclined scientists have drawn their most characteristic conclusions. These conclusions vary from the fashionable scientific philosophies—dependent on, say, Minkowski's symmetrical treatment of the dimensions of time and space, or on Heisenberg's realization that a position in space at a given time cannot be assigned to any particular electron—to the perennial 'problems of philosophy,' dependent on the fact that scientists have repeatedly found it convenient to make use of concepts like mind, matter, causation, or energy. The mind–matter antithesis provides a simple illustration of this argument. Its origin is somewhat analogous to the process in mathematics of determining which terms in a set of equations are variable and which are constant with respect to some desired quantity. Regarding the raw data of experience as the field in which relations are to be established, the on the whole earlier attempts at organization, culminating in the work of Thomas Aquinas, were above all *comprehensive*—they aimed at embracing the totality of experience, whether sensational or introspective. The later attempts at greater precision demanded, it was found, a more piecemeal attack; the comprehensive teleological concepts of Aristotle and Aquinas were abandoned in favour of others which would permit a greater degree of exactitude to be introduced into a more limited field; and it was found that much of the data of the senses remained constant with respect to different observers to so great an extent that they could be treated as though they were independent of the observer. Consequently there grew up one of the characteristic concepts of post-Cartesian epistemology, that of the 'external world,' an expression summarizing those elements of experience with respect to which the observer can be treated as a constant; and the subsidiary division of qualities of sensations into 'primary' and 'secondary,' initiated by Galileo, represented a further attempt to exclude from the 'external world' everything not amenable to mathematical treatment. The concept of the 'observer,' as the constant term in the equation, is complementary (though of course it becomes a variable in psychological equations). This bifurcation has proved a very convenient one for scientists: but clearly, any investigation as to how it is that an observer can observe the external world can only lead to a linguistic answer—that we have defined 'observer' and 'external world' in

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such a way that it is so. We can, of course, abolish the 'external world' at a moment's notice by electing to classify experience in accordance with different categories, and it may well be that it will at some time be found convenient to do this—the readiness of scientists to reclassify the data of experience has been very marked since the inceptions of Planck's 'quantum of action,' the redefinition of simultaneity by Einstein, and the rediscovery of Mendel's hypotheses. It is not, therefore, in books entitled *The Scientific Attitude* that we expect to find statements like this one by Dr. C. M. Waddington: 'Marxism . . . is in perfect agreement with science [in so far as] it is a materialistic philosophy . . . [which] means merely that there is a world of stubborn reality which we can investigate, and which can be changed by our actions, but not by our thoughts alone. As Lenin wrote, "The sole property of matter—with the recognition of which materialism is vitally connected—is the property of being objective reality, of existing outside our cognition".'

Dr. Waddington's little book is a mine of such philosophical generalizations drawn from particular scientific conventions. One other (italicized) statement is worthy of quotation in this connection: '*Science is the organized attempt of mankind to discover how things work as causal systems.* The scientific attitude of mind is an interest in such questions.' This statement is worthy of inspection because it embodies an assumption which has given rise to one of the most troublesome and persistent 'problems of philosophy,' that revolving round determinism. Causality is, in point of fact, one of the scientist's conventions for ordering the data of experience; in so far as it is used by scientists, it holds among those data because it is agreed that for scientific purposes we shall attach no meaning to the statement that an occurrence is uncaused—we agree to regard any event as the consequent of its antecedent circumstances. The associated concept of the 'uniformity of nature' stands in the same case; we don't choose to attach any meaning to the statement that similar antecedent circumstances can produce different consequences. If an unsuspected consequence appears to occur, we 'explain' it by referring it to some hitherto unconsidered factor in the antecedent circumstances which is necessarily always present, because the 'same' conditions (*e.g.* of time and place) cannot, by definition, hold in the case of two different experiments. The usefulness of this convention has shown itself in the many dynamical laws based upon it. Where scientists found themselves unable to apply it (*e.g.* in thermo-dynamics, radiology, and the study of heredity), they did not hesitate to replace it with concepts of probability, which enabled the observed phenomena to be treated *en masse* with an equal degree of mathematical rigour, but made no secret of the unpredictability of individual events.

This 'scientific attitude,' then (if there is meaning to be attached to the expression), does not involve the elevations of any or all of the conventions adopted by scientists into 'philosophical truths,' principles of action, or ethical criteria.'[1] On the contrary, the

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attitude characteristic of the contemporary scientist is a willingness to recognize the conventionalism of the concepts he uses, and a readiness to redefine them or abandon them when their usefulness seems exhausted. Indeed, this readiness in physicists during the last thirty years has bequeathed us a number of concepts, each of which unifies its particular field of application, but is logically incompatible with the others. It is at this point that we see some of the limitations implied by the 'scientific attitude'—it is useless, as Sir William Dampier points out in his Introduction, to look to science at any given time to see life steadily and see it whole, though it may be the endless quest for this goal (as propagandists phrase it) that precipitates the important advances in science.

If the 'scientific attitude' has any connotations in the sphere of ethics, they will be to suggest to the scientist (or to anyone else of a similar frame of mind) a comparable willingness to reformulate the criteria of morality when they seem inapplicable to the relevant data; but this is not obviously a case of logical implication. Much has also been said (by Dr. Waddington, for example) of the connection between contemporary science and the characteristic attitudes and forms of contemporary artistic expression. A propos of this, it is interesting to compare what has been delineated in this review as the most fundamental attitude of the scientist with what D. W. Harding and F. R. Leavis have to say on the subject of Eliot's 'creation of concepts' (*Scrutiny*, September, 1936 and Summer, 1942). I cannot do better than conclude with a passage from *East Coker* which I have had occasion before to quote in a similar connection:

> There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
> For the pattern is new in every moment
> And every moment is a new and shocking
> Valuation of all we have been.

R. O. C. WINKLER.

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[1]Every biologist who performs experiments with rats knows that a rat is an animal with certain behaviour and functions; a good rat is one in which these functions have been able to develop in their most definite and characteristic form, and conditions are good for rats in proportion as they allow this development to proceed completely and harmoniously, not inhibiting or exaggerating one point at the expense of another.'—*The Scientific Attitude*, p. 52.

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HÖLDERLIN: POET OF THE GODS

HÖLDERLIN: GEDICHTE, selected and edited with an introduction by A. Closs (Duckworth, 6/-).

This is an admirable book: a comprehensive selection of Hölderlin's poetry which includes all his most important work—*Menons Klagen um Diotima, Der Archipelagus, Brod und Wein, Der Rhein, Patmos*—for a mere 6/-. The only possible criticism one could make is that the introductory essay is too short to fulfil its function effectively. Despite the renascent interest in this poet, we have for assistance, in English, only the long study by Ronald Peacock which, though useful on points of detail, is verbose and tends to be smudgy in its general account, and now this essay by Mr. Closs, rather too curt a précis for the novice. But it would have been hardly possible for Mr. Closs to write adequately within the limits set by his undertaking.

Hölderlin is that rare thing, a genuinely philosophical poet, and a few brief remarks about the general outline of his philosophy may not be out of place here. He saw history as a rhythmic alternation of light and darkness—or of form and chaos. To live the truly human life, in whatever era, meant to revere and live in accordance with the forces of Nature—"die stille, grosse, allbelebende Natur'—and for Hölderlin, 'the forces of Nature' was no mere catchword: it included everything under the heading of natural environment, configuration and climate of the homeland as well, and was so regarded that it became not just natural environment but *super-natural* environment. The human lived not among mountains and trees and winds but among Gods: his life, therefore, should be built round the principle of worship and thanksgiving and love. The historical ideal of such life (*Humanität*, Hölderlin called it) was to be found in the Athenians: Winckelmann's Greek revival became a living symbol in the hands of a later poet.

Hellas proved the possibility of Hölderlin's ideal for a society (see especially *Der Archipelagus*), and the woman he loved unhappily, Diotima, proved its possibility for the individual. These incarnations fortified Hölderlin in his own tragic life and in his struggle with an age which was part of the 'Night': like Rilke, he is at once the complainant of the dreadful reality and the prophet of the joyous ideal:

> Wie der Zwist der Liebenden, sind die Dissonanzen der Welt. Versöhnung ist mitten im Streit und alles Getrennte findet sich wieder. Es scheiden und kehren im Herzen die Adern und einiges, ewiges, glühendes Leben ist Alles.'[1]

To describe Hölderlin as a Nature-poet is to call to mind Wordsworth, and in general tendencies there is a certain similarity. What F. R. Leavis (in *Revaluation*) writes of the latter—'Wordsworth's pre-occupation was with a distinctively human naturalness, with sanity and spiritual health, and his interest in mountains was

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subsidiary'—is immediately applicable to Hölderlin, with the substitution of 'Greeks' for 'mountains.' Mr. Peacock puts the case very aptly when he says, 'very little of Hölderlin's poetry is individual or personal; and where it seems not to be immediately the expression of communal religious experience, it is potentially so. It embodies beliefs for a society, it is directed towards a society.' But the distinction between the two poets may be economically indicated by saying that though both are predominantly concerned with a *Humanität*, a human way of life, yet Hölderlin is the *religious* poet and Wordsworth is, by comparison, the *psychological* or *sociological* poet. Hölderlin sings of 'Götter,' his Gods, while Wordsworth speaks of his blunter 'Nature':

'Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ . . .'
'Im Arme der Götter wuchs ich gross'
('In the arms of the Gods I grew great')

However, Hölderlin is more often likened to Shelley, presumably because Shelley is the accepted symbol of passionate fervour. But in spite of his milder ratiocination, Wordsworth is more justly to be compared with Hölderlin. The truth is, indeed, that Hölderlin combines Wordsworth's solid thoughtfulness with Shelley's poetic ardour and, to my thinking, probably transcends both of our poets—though, unless the reader's grasp of the language is profounder than mine, he may not always feel as confident about Hölderlin's rapturous 'dying-into' Nature as about Wordsworth's more reasoned worship. Mr. Closs says of Hölderlin that 'he spoke with the tongue of the spirit rather than with words,' and I feel that occasionally this is true in a derogatory sense.[2]

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[1] 'Like lovers' quarrels are the dissonances of the world. Reconciliation is implicit in the strife and all that is divided finds itself. The veins separate in the heart and return to it, and everything is one united, eternal glowing life.' (Letter to his brother.)

cf. Rilke's 'And I now confess, dear Countess, that I regard life as a thing of the most unimpeachable deliciousness, and that the intrication of so many fatalities and horrors, the sacrifice of such numerous destinies, all that has insuperably grown up for us during these last years into an ever-increasing terror, cannot confuse my judgment about the fulness and goodness and affectionateness of existence.' (Letter to Countess Dietrichstein, Oct. 1918.)

[2] While going the Romantic rounds we might as well include Keats: the 'roundness' of Hölderlin's imagery brings him much closer to Keats at his best than to Shelley. Compare *An den Äther*, for instance, with the ode *To Autumn*:

Himmlischer! sucht nicht dich mit ihren Augen die Pflanze,
Strekt nach dir die schüchternen Arme der niedrige Strauch nicht?
Dass er dich finde, zerbricht der gefangene Saame die Hülse;
Dass er, belebt von dir, in deiner Welle sich bade,

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Nonetheless it is just the sound thought-structure of Hölderlin's verse that gives him the advantage over Rilke, the other fashionable German poet. For Rilke is always *locally* cogent and confident, and yet a general survey of his philosophical system leaves one with slight but persistent doubts, while this is not the case with Hölderlin. The *main ideas* behind Rilke's poetry are clear enough and are competent to carry the weight of his verse, and these ideas—whose mainspring is the keeping clean and bright of the instruments of living by no sentimental indulgence in the fear of dying—are far too virile to justify Miss E. M. Butler in the deduction of her recent book that the poetry is 'like a shooting star with no guarantee for the future.' But unfortunately Rilke was not content with these unexceptionable main ideas and inclined to fill in between them with less healthy and even cranky 'sub-ideas'—some of them, like the fuss over the idea of the woman who loves with no hope of or desire for reciprocation, come near to simple sentimentality. One might, crudely, put it this way: Hölderlin's ecstatic imagination never breaks the link, however tenuous it may be drawn, with the essential articles of his faith, whereas Rilke's keen imagination does sometimes break the chain and rush away on its own business, dragging the 'ideas,' rattling somewhat, in the rear. And so, in his effort to re-attach 'ideas' to 'poetry,' Rilke was occasionally tempted to twist them out of their pristine sanity and normality.

Hölderlin was, singlemindedly, a philosophical poet. Rilke had a strong tinge of the aesthete's taste for imaginative pioneering (and what ability!), but still thought of himself as a philosophical poet, and consequently spent much time attempting by personal explanations and interpretations to prove the presence of a consistent metaphysical system. I hasten to say that I consider Rilke a truly great poet, and I think most people to-day will find Hölderlin less interesting, if finally more satisfying. This edition should do much to further his reputation among a public who may know of him only as one who was butchered to make a surrealist holiday.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

Schüttelt der Wald den Schnee, wie ein uberlästig Gewand,
ab . . .
(Heavenly One! does not the plant seek you with its eyes,
And the lowly shrub stretch its shy arms out to you?
That it may find you, the imprisoned seed shatters the
husk;
That, animated by you, it may bathe in your waves,
The forest shakes off the snow like an importunate gar-
ment.)

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A NOVEL TO RECOMMEND.

DARKNESS AT NOON, by Arthur Koestler (*Cape, 8s.*).

This is a novel to be most strongly recommended, even if these were not such lean times for novel-readers. It is to be hoped that as soon as normal conditions return to the publishing trade Mr. Cape will make *Darkness at Noon* widely available in a cheap pocket edition. To the general reader it has the appeal of being the only plausible explanation yet offered of the Moscow Trials, and a creation of prison psychology; to the highbrow who doesn't find Aldous Huxley stimulating it will give delight as that rarest of things, a really intellectual piece of fiction which provides absorbing matter for speculation. Those who know Mr. Koestler's earlier writings will know where the prison material comes from, and why—the book's only flaw—it bulks rather too closely to be in scale. The introduction suggests how it is that the character of the protagonist, N. S. Rubashov, is such a remarkable achievement: the book is dedicated to the memory of those victims of the Moscow Trials known to the author, and Rubashov's life is a synthesis of theirs, we are told. Nevertheless, a real feat, the poignancy is controlled by the author's detachment, there is not a false note or touch in spite of the horrors portrayed and the pity communicated, and the novel is in consequence a work of art. [The translation is almost entirely admirable.] And it is therefore a slighter example of the order of fiction to which *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent* belong. It is indeed impossible to read *Darkness at Noon* without recalling Conrad, but only because Mr. Koestler, with similar creative gifts as a novelist, is also an intellectual with moral, ethical and sociological preoccupations. The 'trial' and the passages between Rubashov and his examiner that lead up to it are made occasions not merely for a psychological study but for an exploration of the total moral situation behind it. Whether one agrees or not with the details of the analysis, its creation in fiction is invaluable particularly as there is now considerable danger that the history of the Russian Revolution, with its painful lessons for humanity, is going to be forgotten in enthusiasm for the defenders of Stalingrad. Mr. Koestler has given us the only possible corrective to the sad fact that history is written by the survivors.

Q. D. L.

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